11/2/21 Tuesday

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New Jersey ACLU Suing to Extend Voting Hours Over 'Technical Issues' and 'Delays' By - Morgan Artyukhina

Following reports of technical issues blocking people from voting at some New Jersey polling locations on Tuesday, the state's branch of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said it had filed an emergency motion to get voting hours extended in the Garden State.

"No eligible voter should be disenfranchised due to a technical error. Racial justice - and the law - demand it," the constitutional rights group <u>wrote on Twitter</u>, noting their motion was filed in conjunction with the League of Women Voters.

According to the <u>New York Times</u>, electronic polling books, or e-poll books, have been struggling to remain connected to the internet all day. It is the first time the mid-Atlantic state has used the tablet-like devices in an election.

"I woke up to a phone call about it," Jason Cilento, mayor of the small northern town of Dunellen, told the paper. He said the town's sole polling station had a line of 30 to 40 voters at times.

"They were annoyed, of course," he said. "Then there were reboots."

Alicia D'Alessandro, a spokesperson for the state government, said the problems were isolated and that most of the state's polling stations had been operating without incident.

"If any voters were unable to vote due to these issues, we encourage them to return to their polling location and cast a ballot," she said. Polls are scheduled to close at 8 pm, barring success in the ACLU's motion to extend.

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, a Democrat, came into Election Day with a comfortable
11-point lead in the polls, suggesting it's likely he will be re-elected - a first for a Democratic governor in the largely Democratic state in more than 40 years. His rival, Republican candidate Jack Ciattarelli, owns a medical publishing company and is a former state lawmaker. He supported former US President Donald Trump's reelection campaign in 2020 and headlined a rally in support of Trump's claims to have been cheated by Democrats in the election.

In that election, which took place before the widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines and thus limited the safety of traditional voting methods, widespread computer problems plagued voters' efforts to cast ballots. The incidents helped fuel <u>claims of malpractice</u> against election workers and manufacturers of the voting machines. However, <u>no evidence</u> of widespread or systematic tampering with results has been found.

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US Navy's Zumwalt Stealth Destroyers Will Replace Rapid-Fire Guns With Hypersonic Missiles - Report

By - Morgan Artyukhina

The US Navy is reportedly planning on refitting its three stealthy Zumwalt-class destroyers once again, this time by replacing its deck guns with launch tubes for its forthcoming ship-based hypersonic missile.

It's a strange and ironic return to form: when the Navy was dreaming up a future heavy warship in the 1990s, it originally envisioned a massive "arsenal ship" with 500 vertical launch tubes that could relentlessly pummel coastal installations. That project, SC-21, eventually led to the Zumwalt program, a scaled-down version that replaced many of the VLS with two massive rapid-fire 155-millimeter Advanced Gun Systems.

The AGS, too, suffered a cruel blow after the Navy decided to slash the number of Zumwalts it wanted, sending the cost of the gun's unique ammunition sky-high. The Navy later decided to use it as a generic missile destroyer, making its bread-and-butter weapon the SM-2 and SM-6 missiles and giving it launchers for smaller missiles like the Evolved Sea Sparrow. Last week, the Navy told Naval News that the AGS' fate has finally been sealed: beginning in fiscal year 2024, the units housing the two big guns will be ripped out of the three warships entirely and replaced with more missile tubes carrying the Intermediate-Range Conventional Prompt Strike (IRCPS or just CPS) hypersonic missile.

The Navy said it has begun "engineering planning efforts" for replacing the AGS mounts, but noted that the space will only be used for hypersonic VLS tubes. The service did not answer a question about how many hypersonic VLS tubes it would carry. However, budget estimates released in June suggested that each destroyer would get 12 such tubes, termed "Advanced Payload Modules."

The US Army and Navy conducted a joint test of the IRCPS in Hawaii in March 2020, although the Pentagon released few details about the test, including the speed and distance attained. Both services will make use of the same Common-Hypersonic Glide Body (C-HGB) for their surface-launched hypersonic missiles. The Army's, a TEL-fired missile simply named the Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW), is expected to have a 1,700-mile range. Hypersonic weapons travel faster than Mach 5, or 3,800 miles per hour, making them much faster than standard missiles. While some are continuously powered cruise missiles, others use unpowered glide bodies that soar toward their targets after being given an initial burst of tremendous speed. Their speed and unpredictable flight paths makes them almost impossible to intercept, although some more advanced air defense systems, like Russia's S-500 Triumf, are claimed to be capable of tracking and downing them.

The US has several hypersonic weapons <u>in development</u>, but presently has none in its inventory, placing it behind Russia and China, both of which have deployed multiple such weapons. Russia also has its own ship-launched hypersonic missile, the Zircon, which has been successfully tested several times against surface targets. Last month, a Russian Yasen-class ballistic missile <u>submarine successfully test-fired</u> a Zircon for the first time.

In September, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea <u>also claimed</u> it had tested a hypersonic missile named Hwasong-8, although few details about the weapon are known.

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Pelosi, Progressive Dems Losing Patience on Spending Package Talks as Manchin Says 'Not in a Rush'

By - Morgan Artyukhina

Following a closed-door meeting with Democrats on Tuesday morning, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) said the final issues halting passage of the dual spending bills central to the Biden administration's agenda could be ironed out in a couple of hours, setting up the possibility of a vote by the end of the week.

"I'm not announcing a vote," <u>Pelosi told reporters</u> as she left the meeting on Tuesday morning, "but I did say that this could be resolved by the end of the day."

Finalizing the bill's contents would enable its wording to be updated and finalized as well, setting up the possibility of a vote by Friday if Pelosi's timeline holds up.

The meeting aimed at shoring up agreement on the final parts of the Build Back Better Act, which is presently valued at \$1.75 trillion over the next 10 years. However, centrist Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV), whose support is necessary in the almost evenly split Senate, has held up passage for weeks as he consistently negotiates the cost downward.

"I will not support a bill that is this consequential without thoroughly understanding the impact that it will have on our national debt, our economy, and most importantly, all of our American people," <u>Manchin said</u> on Monday. Taxes on corporations and the wealthy are intended to pay for the bill's cost, but Republicans have cast doubts on its ability to do so.

The <u>largest part</u> of the package, intended to address climate change, has remained the most contentious. Manchin, a two-term senator and former governor of coal-rich West Virginia, receives the most donations from the coal, oil and gas industries of any US lawmaker. Other issues still being settled include drug pricing changes for Medicare, the US' national health insurance program for seniors and certain disabled groups. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said Tuesday afternoon that an agreement had been reached to allow Medicare Part D and Part B to negotiate drug prices.

"Hopefully, [the negotiators] will finish tonight. I'm being optimistic," said Rep. <u>Debbie Dingell</u> (D-MI). "I think we've got to act this week."

Despite the optimism of Pelosi's team, Manchin said Tuesday it would take "quite a while" to pass the bill, which is being pushed through via a budget reconciliation rule that allows it to avoid the bill-killing filibuster.

"I just think it's going to take quite a while. You're talking about overhauling the entire tax code. That is tremendous. And there needs to be input. We're not in a rush right now," Manchin said. "The rush was trying to get everything before the president went overseas," referring to <u>Biden's attendance</u> at the COP 26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, UK, currently underway. Democrats had also hoped that going into Election Day, which is November 2, they would have the monthslong negotiations settled, giving them an <u>achievement to present</u> to voters. Parallel to the massive Build Back Better social spending bill is a second infrastructure bill, officially called the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which together form the core of

Biden's post-pandemic economic recovery program. While the infrastructure bill could be more easily passed, the Democrats' left wing fears that voting on them separately will result in the party's right wing refusing to support the social spending bill at all.

Manchin on Monday <u>accused progressives</u> of holding the infrastructure bill "hostage" to the social spending bill, saying it wouldn't convince him to support it.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), a democratic socialist who caucuses with the Democrats, has also shown impatience with the endless negotiations, which were supposed to have yielded a vote in late September.

"This process cannot go on week after week month after month," he said on Tuesday morning. "It's finally got to come to an end. And I will do everything I can to see that we get a vote on the floor of the Senate as soon as possible. Hopefully next week."

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Somalia Kicks Off Much-Delayed Elections for Federal Parliament's Lower House By - Morgan Artyukhina

Somalia has begun the second phase of its complex electoral process, with electors voting on their representatives in the lower house of parliament. When the voting is concluded, the East African state will be set to hold presidential elections - more than a year after they were originally scheduled.

On Monday, Somali Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble, who took charge of organizing the country's elections in April to help resolve a national crisis, <u>announced the beginning</u> of elections to the House of the People, Somalia's lower house of parliament.

A debate about how to hold the elections helped fuel a political crisis beginning in late 2020. Unable to resolve the finer points of the process, December elections were put off indefinitely and by April 2021, the legislature intervened and gave Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, better known as Farmaajo, a two-year mandate to organize new elections.

This amounted to a de facto term extension, and after Roble came out against the move, elements from rival clans in the Somali military <u>began to mutiny</u>, taking over parts of the capital city of Mogadishu and declaring their opposition to "a dictator."

The next day, <u>Farmaajo backed down</u> and put Roble in charge of the elections in order to avert civil war and preserve the foreign financial aid that is essential to the fragile Somali economy. Under his direction, the federative nation's five states agreed to <u>hold indirect elections</u> in three phases, <u>beginning with the Senate</u> in late July, then proceeding to the House of the People, and ending with presidential elections in October.

However, things didn't quite happen that way. Senate elections, conducted by state legislatures, took longer than expected, and a <u>new quarrel arose</u> between Farmaajo and Roble over who had the power to appoint a new intelligence chief. The impasse was only resolved on October 22, and elections for the Senate's 54 senators concluded just days later.

The House of the People has 275 delegates, but like senators, they aren't elected by popular vote: instead, nearly 30,000 clan delegates will cast their votes for candidates over the next few weeks.

An oddity of Somalia's system is that a sixth state, Somaliland, declared its independence in 1991 as the country collapsed into civil war, but no other nation has recognized its nationhood. Despite this, Somalia still elects 46 MPs to represent the breakaway state in the House of the People. On Monday, the first two delegates, chosen in Mogadishu, were to be among the Somaliland representatives, Garowe Online reported.

Once both houses of the Federal Parliament are seated, the lawmakers then vote on a new head of state. Farmaajo is seeking reelection against 13 challengers, including several ex-presidents.

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Biden: China Made 'Big Mistake' by Not Showing Up to COP26 Summit By - Evan Craighead

US President Joe Biden held a news conference on Tuesday during the second day of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). The UN conference seeks to accelerate member-nations' actions toward the goals of both the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

When asked about China's refusal to attend G20 meetings and COP26, Biden asserted that Beijing had made a "big mistake" and "lost influence" by choosing not to make an appearance at the two-week summit in Glasgow, Scotland.

"I think its been a big mistake, quite frankly, for China ... not showing up," Biden told reporters, adding that the world will question Beijing's "value."

"They've lost an ability to influence people around the world and all the people here at COP[26]," he added.

The US president stressed that while there is clear "competition" between China and the US, there does not have to be "conflict."

Biden added that he would communicate this 'competition, not conflict' approach during upcoming virtual talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping.A date has not been set for their meeting, he noted.

Although the US has a rocky record with climate agreements, Biden highlighted that "America showed up" for COP26 to tackle climate change, which he views as the "single-most-important issue" for the world.

Biden: Russia Has 'Serious Climate Problems'

Biden also took time to address the absence of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has <u>expressed Moscow's commitment</u> to support a draft and joint resolution seeking to end deforestation by 2030.

"His tundra's burning. Literally, the tundra's burning," Biden said, speaking of Putin. "He has serious climate problems. And he [has been] mum on his willingness to do anything."

Biden's Russian counterpart stressed this week that he believes "conservation of forests and other natural ecosystems" will play a vital role in global efforts against greenhouse emissions and global warming.

Russia has expressed a commitment to achieving a carbon-neutral economy by 2060. The US president touted that, aside from COVID-19-related supply chain issues, the American economy is "growing." Biden additionally proclaimed that Russia and members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) bear some of the responsibility because they did not increase their production rate.

"First of all, the significant reason why prices are up is because of COVID affecting the supply chain," Biden told reporters. "If you take a look at ... gas prices, and you take a look at oil prices, that is a consequence of thus far the refusal of Russia or the OPEC nations to pump more oil."

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US Issues Final Clearance on Nation's First COVID Vaccine for Children as Young as Five By - Evan Craighead

Earlier Tuesday, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) unanimously moved to recommend Pfizer-BioNTech's pediatric COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 to 11. US children aged 5 to 11 can now receive pediatric-grade COVID-19 vaccines after CDC Director Rochelle Walensky issued a same-day endorsement of the ACIP recommendation regarding Pfizer-BioNTech's submission.

"CDC now expands vaccine recommendations to about 28 million children in the United States in this age group and allows providers to begin vaccinating them as soon as possible," the CDC release noted

The issuance highlighted that the pediatric COVID-19 vaccine submitted by Pfizer-BioNTech "was nearly 91 percent effective in preventing COVID-19 among children aged 5-11 years."

US President Joe Biden confirmed in a Tuesday evening statement that the US has "secured enough vaccine supply for every child in America" and deliveries are already en route.

"The program will ramp up over the coming days, and fully up and running during the week of November 8," the US president said. "Parents will be able to bring their children to thousands of pharmacies, pediatrician's offices, schools, and other sites to get vaccinated."

Biden called the push "a major step forward" in the US fight against the contagious disease.

The 14-0 ACIP decision came following an hours-long meeting that began at around 11 a.m.

Eastern Time, and shots could be administered to children as soon as tonight or tomorrow.

Prior to the vote, members of the panel openly expressed that they would support the proposed pediatric COVID-19 vaccine, which is one-third of the regular Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine dose administered to teens and adults.

"The reason I'm voting for this is individual protection," said ACIP chair Dr. Grace Lee, who sits on the COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Technical Subgroup. "I value preventing infection in children, and I think it can have a huge positive impact on their health, their social and emotional wellbeing, their educational outcomes, and their long-term trajectory."

White House COVID Response Coordinator Jeffrey Zients told reporters during a Monday news conference that the US is in "great shape on supply" of pediatric vaccines, and should be able to vaccinate all 28 million US children in the 5 to 11 age group.

It was also revealed that the Biden administration has already made packaging and shipment arrangements for the expected millions of vaccine doses. The administration hopes its push to ship out shots will provide parents with a wide range of locations to vaccinate their children. "We are not waiting on the operations and logistics," the White House COVID Response Coordinator emphasized.

Zients also announced that day that the US had reached two milestones in its fight against COVID-19, as 80% of US adults have been administered at least one vaccine dose and 70% US adults have been fully vaccinated against the highly-contagious global pandemic.

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US DoJ Files Antitrust Lawsuit to Block Penguin Random House's Acquisition of Rival Simon & Schuster

By - Evan Craighead

The US Department of Justice argues that Penguin Random House's proposed acquisition of competing publisher Simon & Schuster would violate the Horizontal Merger Guidelines of the DoJ's Antitrust Division. The department believes the move would lead to authors being paid less and could also diminish the quantity and range of books published.

A complaint filed on Tuesday in the US District Court for the District of Columbia accuses Penguin Random House of vying for a merger that would grant the multinational conglomerate publishing company "outsized influence over who and what is published, and how much authors are paid for their work."

The civil antitrust lawsuit filed by the DoJ details that the all-cash deal to acquire Simon & Schuster - worth some \$2.175 billion - is "presumptively anticompetitive" and could harm American workers through "monopsony" - a practice in which a large buyer controls all, or a majority, of a market.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland noted in the <u>DoJ's Tuesday release</u>that the US presently has five major publishers in control of the US publishing industry, known informally as the 'Big Five.'

"If the world's largest book publisher is permitted to acquire one of its biggest rivals, it will have unprecedented control over this important industry," Garland, who heads the DoJ, said in a quoted statement. "American authors and consumers will pay the price of this anticompetitive merger – lower advances for authors and ultimately fewer books and less variety for consumers."

The so-called Big Five publishing houses have effectively turned the US publishing market into an "oligopoly" and the lack of competition will likely lead to lower publishing advances and decreased marketing and editorial support for authors shopping their books around, according to the complaint.

Bertelsmann, a Germany-based media conglomerate and Penguin Random House's parent company, and Simon & Schuster parent company Viacom CBS were both named as defendants in the filing. Viacom CBS is based in New York, New York.

Per the complaint, Penguin Random House is estimated to annually publish 2,000 new trade books in the US, while Simon & Schuster annually publishes 1,000 new trade books in the US. The publishers issued a joint statement, declaring that they would fight the lawsuit, which "would harm the very authors DOJ purports to protect."

"We will fight this lawsuit vigorously and look forward to PRH serving as the steward for this storied publishing house in the years to come," according to the joint statement by Penguin Random House and Simon & Schuster.

"Simon & Schuster and Penguin Random House strongly disagree with the DOJ that this transaction will harm competition and believe firmly that there is no basis for these claims," Simon & Schuster said in a same-day memo to employees.

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Roger Stone Weighs In on Possible 2024 Trump Campaign, VA Gubernatorial Election Results By - Evan Craighead

Roger Stone, an ex-campaign adviser and longtime ally to former US President Donald Trump, recently made headlines for admonishing Florida Governor Ron DeSantis over his refusal to conduct an audit of the state's 2020 general election results. Stone, a Florida resident, said that DeSantis' inaction may force him to run against the governor in 2022.

Stone, 69, kept up his criticism of DeSantis during a Tuesday appearance in the second hour of Radio Sputnik's "The Backstory," telling co-hosts Lee Stranahan and John Kiriakou that the 43-year-old Florida governor should focus on Florida and abandon any hopes of a potential 2024 presidential campaign.

"It's time for Ron DeSantis to pledge that he will support Donald Trump, who has earned our nomination," he proclaimed, without going into further detail on why Trump is owed the GOP spot in 2024.

Additionally, DeSantis still has a lot to demonstrate in terms of leadership, according to Stone. He said that the governor's failure to <u>properly enforce his controversial prohibition on mask mandates in public schools</u> has led to districts - particularly those in wealthier areas - thumbing their nose at the statewide order.

Stone stressed that DeSantis should "walk the walk" and take harsher action against districts defying the order, as fines would ultimately be paid by taxpayers.

Asked whether he would support a Trump-Desantis ticket, Stone highlighted that the duo both have primary residences in Florida, which may hypothetically impact the national appeal of the GOP ticket.

<u>Despite DeSantis' popularity</u> among GOP voters, Stone insisted that the Florida governor should instead focus on auditing his state's 2020 election results. He also mused on what would

happen to the state of Florida if DeSantis focused his time on a presidential campaign, rather than the state's residents.

"I think he owes deference to Donald Trump," the 69-year-old asserted, noting that Trump played a major role in DeSantis' campaign.

Stone panned the 43-year-old's initial campaign as "inept" before the intervention of both Trump and Susan "Susie" Wiles, a Florida-based GOP political consultant who was called in to "land the plane" for DeSantis.

Stone, who was a Virginia resident at one point, also weighed in on the <u>vital election day in the Commonwealth</u> - which has seen many districts shift from a red (a Republican-majority) to a blue over recent years.

With recent polls showing a <u>neck-and-neck gubernatorial race</u>, and a <u>possible GOP victory for candidate Glenn Youngkin</u>, Stone believes it is possible the Clintons may intervene and attempt to subvert the election.

He also noted that the gubernatorial elections in Virginia and New Jersey could provide a "pulse" of the Biden administration.

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Strong 5.9-Magnitude Earthquake Rattles Central Chile - EMSC By - Gaby Arancibia

Chile is no stranger to powerful earthquakes as the South American nation sits along the subducting Nazca tectonic plate. Experts have previously acknowledged that large, damaging quakes have rattled the country roughly every 25 to 100 years, with the last major incident taking place in 2010.

A powerful 5.9-magnitude earthquake struck central Chile overnight Wednesday, prompting tremors to be felt hundreds of miles away from the epicentre in the Valparaiso region.

The European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre reported that the quake struck at a depth of 112 kilometres in Valparaiso, some 89 kilometres from the capital of the South American nation. Testimonies <u>collected</u> by the agency include locals describing the earthquake as lasting a "long" time, whereas others noted that the incident was "really loud" as well as "short but strong." "Extremely strong and long", another user commented about the quake.

Tsunami warnings have not been issued as a result of the quake.

Chile endured one of the worst earthquakes to date in 1960, when a 9.5-magnitude tremor struck some 100 miles off the Chilean coastline. The incident prompted widespread damage and a significant death toll after the area was hit by a tsunami.

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Israeli Aircraft Conduct Strike in Damascus Outskirts, Syrian State Media Claims

By - Gaby Arancibia

The latest development comes amid ongoing military drills in which Israeli forces are taking part in weeklong war drills that are said to simulate a full-scale war with Lebanon's Hezbollah movement.

Israeli jets have reportedly carried out a missile strike against Syria, in the Damascus countryside, it has been detailed.

Citing a military source, the SANA news agency <u>reported</u> that the incident took place at approximately 12:56 a.m. Wednesday, and that a "number of missiles" were allegedly deployed "from the direction of northern occupied Palestine."

It was further indicated that the strike had caused some "material losses" in the Zakia area. The extent of the damage remains unclear.

The Israel Defense Forces has yet to respond to the reports.

Syrian air defense forces <u>recently</u> destroyed a pair of missiles launched by the IDF from the Golan Heights. At the time the strike targeted Syrian air defense facilities.

Israeli forces are presently taking part in a massive weeklong exercise that is reportedly expected to see participants involved in simulated war drills against Hezbollah militants. The drills are due to run until Thursday.

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Dreamin' Joe - Cartoon

No stranger to taking a little shut-eye on the global stage, US President Joe Biden recently snatched headlines again after he appeared to nod off while participating in the COP26 climate change summit in Scotland.

<u>Footage</u> of the latest incident captured Biden dozing off for less than 30 seconds before an aide approached him, effectively prompting the American commander-in-chief to become more alert during the conference.

The not-to-surprising development unfolded just moments before the president had previously nodded off for less than 10 seconds during the summit's opening speeches. The cat naps took place amid human rights activist Eddie Ndopu's address.

Biden closed out his participation at the climate summit on Tuesday, momentarily <u>blasting China</u> for not taking part in the conference. He further detailed that he would be holding virtual talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping at an undisclosed date and time.

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'Stab in the Back': French Ambassador to Australia Says 'Deceit' Over AUKUS Deal 'Was Intentional'

By - Nevin Brown

The French Ambassador to Australia, Jean-Pierre Thebault, has accused Australia of intentionally deceiving France over a scrapped submarine deal.

In a speech made at the National Press Club of Australia, Thebault bluntly stated that "the deceit was intentional," and questioned, "what, after such events, can any partner of Australia now think, is the value of Australia's signature?"

The speech deepens a fractured relationship between Australia and France and, to a lesser degree, the United Kingdom and the US.

In mid-September, Australia canceled a \$90 billion deal with France to build 12 diesel-powered submarines that was projected to extend into the 2050s.

Australia instead opted for nuclear-powered submarines through the formation of AUKUS, a trilateral security pact between the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. France's reaction was swift, as they <u>recalled their ambassadors</u> to Australia and the United States days after the announcement of the alliance.

Thebault described Australia's behavior as, "keeping us in the dark, or on the back burner," and that the deal had "far more at stake than providing submarines because it was a common agreement on sovereignty...the way it was handled was plainly a stab in the back."

Thebault acknowledged that Australia is free to go about their national defense as they see fit, but made the claim that Australia did not "ever consult with France when there were countless opportunities,...or without even looked with alternatives with France. Is just out of this world." The fallout from AUKUS has left relations between Australia and France in tatter, as the rhetoric from France does not appear to be easing up.

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Hispanic Democrats Remain Split on Immigration Policy in Biden's Social Spending Bill By - Nevin Brown

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), with 32 voting members in Congress, has not unified on an immigration policy as a part of the social spending bill.

The group holds significant voting power, as Democrats hold a slim majority in the House and need every vote in the Senate, but <u>have not pushed for a unified immigration policy</u> for the Biden administration's social spending bill.

The concern among some in the CHC is reportedly the fragility of passing the wide-ranging bill itself. Rep. Lucille Roybal Allard (D-CA) described the difficulty in making immigration policy a deal-breaker.

"If you look at the bill, I mean, pre-K, home health care, child tax credit [...] any one of those pieces of that legislation, it would be an incredible achievement to pass any one of those," Allard said, adding, "and to bring all that down for something that is not possible; to me, it doesn't make sense."

Members of the CHC are not punting on immigration reform, however. While some have opted for a more flexible approach, others have made it clear that they won't support the bill unless it contains clear solutions on immigration.

Reps. Adriano Espaillat (D-NY), Jesús García (D-IL) and Lou Correa (D-CA.) have refused to vote for any reconciliation bill without immigration provisions. One of the problems that Democrats have faced has been the Senate parliamentarian.

The social spending bill is attempting to be passed through the process of reconciliation, allowing the Senate to pass budget-related bills with a simple majority, dodging a potential filibuster. The Senate parliamentarian determines what can and cannot be done through reconciliation. Thus far, two proposals have been rejected that would have granted legal permanent residence to millions of foreign nationals.

Hispanic Democrats want to include some form of immigration reform in the social spending bill, with Espaillat saying, "I think that you know we all want to see some level of immigration reform."

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Premier League Quarterly Review: Three Stories to Follow Over Remainder of 2021 Season By - Nevin Brown

With the Premier League season a quarter of the way complete, here are a few stories to follow. Three horse races at the top? Man City, Liverpool, and Chelsea

After ten games, Chelsea is on 25 points and has a three-point lead at the top of the table. Hot on their heels are Liverpool, with 22 points, and Manchester City with 20. With apologies to West Ham, who also have 20 points, this is shaping up to be a three-team race for the Premier League title. Or is it?

Chelsea, on the surface, looks like a title contender. They lead the Premier League in goal differential at +23, have conceded the fewest goals, and have scored the second-most. Their expected metrics, however, tell a different story.

During the season, Chelsea has as yet produced 17.2 expected goals and allowed 10.5 expected goals against. Their expected goal differential of +6.6 is third in the league but is dwarfed by Liverpool's +26.3 and City's +21.9.

Chelsea has bagged 25 points in ten games without playing nearly that well. Those points aren't going anywhere, which is great, but if the performances don't improve they'll have a hard time replicating their 2.5 points per match. Chelsea is in the title race because of their points and talent, but if they fall off over the course of the season, don't be surprised.

Will Unai Emery stave off relegation at Newcastle?

Newcastle's new ownership has their fans dreaming of European nights for the first time since playing in the Europa league in 2012-13. For the Magpies to make it to Europe, however, they're going to need to avoid relegation.

With Steve Bruce sacked, <u>Newcastle has been linked to Villarreal manager Unai Emery</u>. Emery is best known in England for his short time at Arsenal, but his record in La Liga and at Paris Saint-Germaine is sterling. He led Sevilla to three consecutive Europa League titles and nabbed one last season with Villarreal.

If he takes over Newcastle, however, he'll need to drag the club out of the relegation fight before he can dream of securing his fifth Europa League title. Newcastle has been the second-worst team in the Premier League, although they have enough talented attacking options in Allan Saint-Maximin, Callum Wilson, Miguel Almiron, and Joeliton to make a charge to back up their standing.

Emery will have his hands full at Newcastle, but he has a track record of success at clubs with modest budgets. If Newcastle brings in a few signings in January the Magpies could be in a position to make a mid-table charge. Not exactly European nights, but definitely a step in the right direction.

Can Antonio Conte turn Tottenham around?

Antonio Conte coming back to the Premier League wasn't a surprise, but his takeover of Tottenham was. When Conte was available in the summer, Tottenham, in need of a new manager, passed on the Italian. Bringing him in a few months later is thought by many to be an admission of failure by the club.

Conte could be exactly what Tottenham needs to break through, however. The self-described "serial winner" is joining a club that can brag about winning the League Cup in 2008 and finishing runner up in the Champions League and second in the Premier League.

Fortunately for Conte, Tottenham is not a barren wasteland of talent. The attacking partnership of Harry Kane and Heung-Min Son is one of the best in the world and Hugo Lloris remains an excellent keeper.

Tottenham's problems over the past few seasons have been their managers' inability to get the best out of a talented midfield. Dele Alli and Tanguy Ndombele are two incredible talents that have had issues maximising their potential in recent seasons.

Conte used a 3-5-2 formation to great effect with Inter Milan last season. The system used a back three, two wide midfielders, two box-to-box central midfielders, one advanced midfielder, and two strikers capable of linking up play and playing on the break.

Tottenham has the two strikers part down pat, with Kane and Son; Ndombele is a perfect advanced midfielder; Pierre Hojbjerg and Dele Alli are tireless midfield pressers, and Sergio Reguilon and Emerson are defensively limited but talented attacking fullbacks. Figuring out a back three may be a challenge, but the point of a three-back set is to minimise the individual requirements of each centre back.

If Conte is going to win a title with Tottenham he'll have to first turn around their season. He has shown that he's capable of winning, but turning Tottenham around could end up being his greatest success.

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A Hangover Cure for the Ages: Byzantine-Era Gold Ring Discovered at Israeli Winery

By - Nevin Brown

Archeologists have uncovered a gold ring fitted with an amethyst stone in Yavne, Israel, dating from the Byzantine period.

The ring, according to archeologists, was found at a dig site that dates to the 7th century CE, but it could be up to four centuries older. Amir Golani, an Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) expert noted that "the person who owned the ring was affluent, and the wearing of the jewel indicated their status and wealth," adding that it could have belonged to either a man or a woman. While the piece of jewelry signified wealth, it could have had another purpose, as a hangover cure. In ancient Greece, an amethyst was believed to be an antidote to drunkenness. The Greek word 'amethystos' can be translated as 'not drunken.' Many wine glasses were carved out of amethyst for this specific reason.

Fueling speculation over the ring's purpose is where it was found. The excavation site in Yavne is located at a massive winery where the largest Byzantine-era wine press to date was discovered. The ring was only 150 meters from a storehouse that could have stored wine jars before they were used.

Elie Haddad, directing the excavation on behalf of the IAA, said, "It is possible that the splendid ring belonged to the owner of the magnificent warehouse, to a foreman, or simply to an unlucky visitor, who dropped and lost their precious ring, until it was finally discovered by us."

The <u>winery at Yavne</u> is thought to have produced the regional wines known as Gaza and Ashkelon, after the seaports from which they were distributed. The complex is believed to have produced up to two million liters of wine a year.

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Norway Strikes \$169 Million Naval Strike Missile Deal By - Nevin Brown

The Royal Norwegian Navy signed two deals with Kongsberg Defense & Aerospace worth \$169 million to purchase new naval strike missiles and to extend the life of the nation's existing missile inventory.

A <u>Kongsberg news release</u> details the capabilities of the naval strike missile and its purported importance to Norway's defense. The missiles are claimed to be the primary weapon used by the Royal Norwegian Navy's fleet of frigates and corvettes, which <u>comprise the bulk of their surface combatant vessels</u>.

The fifth-generation missiles reportedly have a range of up to 115 miles, can elude enemy defense systems through evasive maneuvers and sea-skimming, and, according to the release, offer precision targeting against land or sea-based targets.

The missiles also have a built-in self-destruct mechanism which would come into play if it cannot locate its target - a safety designed to prevent collateral damage.

Norway has the second-longest coastline in the world, after Canada. The Scandinavian country's economy and state revenue are tied to oil and natural gas exploitation. The industry is

entirely <u>comprised of offshore drilling</u> in large maritime regions of the North Sea, as well as northward into the Norwegian Sea and the Barents Sea.

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Virginia Democrat Caught Tampering With Campaign Signs by Police Hours Before Election By - Adriana Montes

Virginia State Delegate Chris Hurst, a Democrat representing the Commonwealth's 12th district, was pulled over by police less than 24 hours before the state's Election Day after a deputy witnessed a woman taking campaign signs and getting into a car Hurst was driving. Hurst was reportedly pulled over by police Monday evening in Radford, Virginia, after a deputy from the Radford Sheriff's Office saw a woman, who has since been identified as Emily Frentewss, take out promotional signs displayed outside the town's recreation center and then climb into the car that Hurst was driving, according to Radford Sheriff Mark Armentrout. Police discovered that Hurst was driving the vehicle with a suspended license, and he was subsequently given a "driving while suspended" notification by a deputy, local news station WSLS reported.

Hurst assumed office in 2018 and is running for reelection to the Virginia House of Delegates to once again represent the 12th district.

The state lawmaker's Republican opponent, Jason Ballard, stated in a Tuesday remark that the Monday night incident is "another excuse why [Hurst] does not deserve one other time period as delegate."

"I'm deeply dissatisfied that Chris Hurst has determined to finish his marketing campaign in such a reckless method," Ballard <u>reportedly</u> said.

This isn't the first time that Hurst has been in the scope of the law. He was allegedly pulled over in Christiansburg in January 2020 for swerving, and underwent a blood-alcohol test that ended up being above the authorized limit.

The incident unfolded just hours before polls opened ahead of Virginia's Tuesday gubernatorial elections.

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Facebook to Shutter Facial Recognition System Amid Rising Safety Concerns By - Adriana Montes

Facebook announced Tuesday it will shut down its facial recognition system — known to instantly identify users in photos and videos, amid growing concern from users and regulators. The company, which last week renamed itself Meta Platforms Inc, said it will also delete existing face scan data belonging to more than 1 billion users.

More than one-third of the app's daily active users have reportedly opted into the face recognition setting, Jerome Pesenti, vice president of artificial intelligence at Facebook noted in a <u>blog post</u> Tuesday.

"Regulators are still in the process of providing a clear set of rules governing its use," Pesenti said. "Amid this ongoing uncertainty, we believe that limiting the use of facial recognition to a narrow set of use cases is appropriate."

The tech industry has faced intense backlash over the past few years by critics who feel that the use of face recognition could compromise privacy, target marginalized groups and normalize intrusive surveillance.

The social media giant, which has long been under scrutiny from regulators and lawmakers over user safety, privacy and a wide range of failures on its platform, has more recently faced increased criticism after whistleblower Frances Haugen leaked internal documents in which she said proved the company put profit before user safety.

Facebook will now be limited to helping users gain access to their locked accounts or unlock a personal device, the company detailed in the Tuesday post. "We will ensure people have transparency and control over whether they are automatically recognized," the release outlined. The policy change will take place globally and is expected to be complete by December.

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Virginia Beach Pastor Arrested in Solicitation of Prostitution Charge By - Adriana Montes

A Virginia Beach pastor is among 17 men accused of solicitation of minors for prostitution after an online sting operation by law enforcement.

According to the Chesterfield County Police Special Victims Unit, John Blanchard, 51, along with the rest of the suspects involved were allegedly soliciting sex from minors through online and social media platforms, NBC affiliate WAVY reported.

According to police, the suspects arranged to meet the "minors" in-person, and when the suspects arrived at the predetermined locations, they were instead met by detectives.

The operation was conducted last week, but police released the details on Monday. The 17 men arrested range in age from 24 to 51 years old. Blanchard was arrested October 29 on charges of solicitation of prostitution from a minor age 16 or older and for using a vehicle to promote prostitution or unlawful sex.

He was later released on bond.

According to the Rock Church <u>website</u>, John Blanchard has been a senior pastor of the Virginia Beach church on Kempsville Road since 2013.

<u>Video</u> of Sunday's service showed Blanchard speaking at the beginning and end of the service, with one Facebook user by the name of Bee Davis commenting "This church is a highway to hell."

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US Marshals to Remove 400 Inmates From DC Jail After Prisoners Left in Unacceptable Conditions

By - Adriana Montes

The US Marshals Service (USMS) announced Tuesday that it will move 400 detainees out of a Washington DC jail after an "unannounced inspection" found they were being held in unacceptable conditions that did not meet federal standards.

Approximately 400 prisoners — all pretrial detainees — are being moved to a federal penitentiary in Pennsylvania, the Marshals Service <u>revealed</u> to The Washington Post. The DC jail at the center of the matter is where defendants in the deadly January 6 Capitol riot are currently being held.

The US Marshals Service released its statement on its inspection at the DC jail on Tuesday. "The USMS inspection was prompted by recent and historical concerns raised regarding conditions at the DC DOC facilities, including those recently raised by various members of the judiciary," the Marshals Service said.

"The US Marshal's inspection of [the Central Detention Facility] revealed that conditions there do not meet the minimum standards of confinement as prescribed by the Federal Performance-Based Detention Standards."

An increased number of complaints about the treatment of jailed defendants in the January 6 insurrection led to the surprise inspection that ultimately discovered evidence of "systemic" mistreatment of general population detainees, but not of the January 6 defendants, officials noted.

The detainees were reportedly found in deplorable and unsanitary conditions, with punitive denial of food and water. The findings were referred to the Justice Department Civil Rights Division.

Conditions at a newer Central Treatment Facility, where January 6 defendants are currently held, "were observed to be largely appropriate and consistent with federal prisoner detention standards," USMS determined. It was later detailed that a transfer from the same DC facility would not be necessary for the insurrection defendants.

The USMS is expected to work alongside officials to undertake a corrective action plan to remedy the shortfalls.

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Top US General Says 'Nothing Overtly Aggressive' in Russian Troop Movement Near Ukraine

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The United States sees "nothing overtly aggressive" in the recent movements of Russian troops near the border with Ukraine, but will continue to monitor the situation, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley said on Wednesday. "What we're seeing is a significant amount of military movements on the Russian side of the Ukrainian border. Nothing overtly aggressive, per se. We've seen this before," Milley said during Aspen Forum. "Last April, Russians ran a very, very large exercise somewhere in between 50,000 of troops or so. What does this mean? We don't know yet, too early to tell. But we're continuing to monitor with all of our capabilities."

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US Officials Brief Ambassadors, Representatives From 35 Nations on Ransomware Threat

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US officials have met with representatives and ambassadors from 35 nations to brief them on efforts to combat ransomware, National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Horne said on Wednesday.

"Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technology Anne Neuberger and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland briefed ambassadors and representatives of 35 countries yesterday on the Counter-Ransomware Initiative (CRI) and U.S. government efforts to accelerate cooperation to counter ransomware," Horne said. Nuland, in particular, encouraged countries to leverage international frameworks, like the Budapest Cybercrime Convention and the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. She discussed the US efforts to counter ransomware, "including using foreign assistance to increase partner capacity against threats and by elevating counter-ransomware efforts in relevant international cooperative efforts," Horne added.

Last week, the State Department announced that it will establish a Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy, with its main focus on international cybersecurity, led by an ambassador at large. The US will also appoint a special envoy for critical and emerging technology to spearhead a technology diplomacy agenda with American allies and partners.

The announcement came against the backdrop of the West's continued allegations of Russian interference in internal affairs and cyberattacks. Moscow denies all such accusations, stating that Western countries have not presented any evidence.

President Joe Biden also warned that cyberattacks allegedly conducted by Russia are "going to end up in a war, a real shooting war with a major power." The American leader accused Russia of seeking to meddle in next year's midterm elections in the US.

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US Concerned by China's Pace of Building Capabilities in Space - US General

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The most significant challenge for the United States from China is the pace at which the latter is developing its technology in space, US Space Force Lt. Gen. Chance Saltzman said on Wednesday.

"The most significant challenge is the pace in which they [China] are developing all their systems, it is such a broad array of the counter-space capabilities that they are pursuing," Saltzman told a briefing.

He drew attention to the speed with which China is developing space programs – from theory to practice, with systems already in orbit.

"I think our [US] challenge is going to be matching that pace," Saltzman said.

China has been investing heavily in its ambitious space program in recent years and has already made significant progress, with 40 launches this year, according to Chinese media. Seven more are planned later in the year.

Among the most significant recent launches was last month's launch of a Changzheng-2F vehicle with manned spacecraft Shenzhou-1 to the Tiangong orbital station.

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RPT - Minneapolis Referendum Not to Defund, Dismantle Police Department if Passed - Activist

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - A referendum to change the Minneapolis Police Department to the Department of Public Safety, voted on by the city's residents, will not defund or dismantle the police, referendum activist Erika Thorne told Sputnik.

"Despite what many people have said, this is not about defunding the police. It's not about dismantling the police. It's about putting the police in a more proper position to respond when we do need people with guns for a situation," Thorne said.

Minneapolis residents are voting in a referendum to change the existing police department to the Department of Public Safety, which would combine social and medical workers with peace officers to take a comprehensive public health approach to safety. The measure will need support from 51% of the Minneapolis residents in order to pass.

Thorne said some situations involving the homeless, drug addicts and those in mental health crises do not require people with guns to respond. Rather, they require trained professionals who can guide the individuals to safer places to recover, Thorne added.

The organizational culture of the police department is also racist and targets people of color, including indigenous people and recent East African immigrants to the city, Thorne said. Minneapolis has been the epicenter of protests following the killing of George Floyd, a 47-year old black man, by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin.

Chauvin was found guilty of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter, and sentenced to 22 years in prison for his role in the death of Floyd.

Some police reforms called for by residents of Minneapolis have been implemented over the last several years, Thorne said. These include calls for body cameras on officers and

de-escalation training. However, it's hard to find out what has actually been implemented, Thorne added.

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RPT: REVIEW - Uncharted Waters: US Gripped by Labor Strikes, Resignations Amid Pandemic

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik), Barrington M. Salmon - Workers in the United States are quitting their jobs in huge numbers as the global pandemic waxes and wanes, while labor unions have called so many strikes in October that some in the media have renamed last month "Striketober."

An estimated 20 million US workers resigned from April to August, according to the latest federal data, a phenomenon that has been dubbed "The Great Resignation."

The rate of resignation was highest among workers in the technology and healthcare sectors and other fields experiencing pandemic-induced spikes in demand for their products and services, a Harvard business school analysis revealed.

Meanwhile, about 40 workplaces across the nation have gone on strike since August 1, according to data compiled by Bloomberg Law - nearly double the number during the same period last year. In mid-October, France24 reported that more than 100,000 workers are currently on strike or about to strike.

Strikes have affected a range of industries - hitting tech firms like Amazon.com to manufacturers like John Deere and food companies like Kellogg's. Tens of thousands of workers have also walked off the job at whiskey distilleries, schools, hospitals and medical facilities.

Although many cite the pandemic as the main driver of the wave of resignations, some experts believe more than just the health crisis itself is to blame.

"This is not about the pandemic or working remotely," Georgia State University business school professor Isabelle Monlouis, told Sputnik. "These just accelerated the pace towards change." SOCIAL CONTRACT VIOLATED

Monlouis, who is also the associate director of the HJ Russell Center for Entrepreneurship in Atlanta, said the surge in resignations has been brewing for a while, particularly in academia, as many organizations were incredibly unreasonable with the amount of work they demanded with no reciprocity.

People who have outwardly successful careers and retirement accounts are dissatisfied and that dissatisfaction has resonated for a long time, Monlouis said, while those who were poorly treated will continue to leave or be disengaged.

For example, she said, one issue is the anger of older employees who witness younger peers getting bonuses and salary boosts while they get nothing.

"It's not uncommon to have salary inversion," Monlouis said. "They will continue to make more than you which pisses people off even more."

Hence, many workers realized that it was not a family and that the relationship was a "ruthless proposition."

People are now trying to come up with solutions, but the root causes need to be understood first because the problem is much deeper and structural, she said.

"The social contract between employer and employee has been repeatedly broken," the professor added.

However, Monlouis also said people have learned about the broken social contract and realized that the relationship was very transactional - so they are making a different calculation. Institute for Policy Studies' Black Worker Initiative Director Marc Bayard said for many workers there is no going back to pre-COVID work conditions. Workers are making choices centered on them and their needs as opposed to what companies demand.

"The most obvious thing is that workers are tired and feeling the economic constraint of the COVID environment," Bayard told Sputnik. "People talk about getting back to normal but I'm sure that bartenders, hospital employees and frontline workers don't want to go back to the 2019, 2020 economy."

Bayard said there is no going back to "normal" because that was not sustainable and now workers are seeking alternatives.

"A lot of workers don't want to go back to low wages. People are putting everything on credit to get by. They can't live off low-wage jobs and have/afford childcare. And they can't have 3 or 4 jobs to pay the rent or live in a place with 5 or more people," he said.

As far as those going on strike, veteran labor organizer Dwight Kirk said their priorities include issues such as better pay and quality of life along with sick leave and more flexibility with shifts. "Employees no longer want their jobs to dominate their lives. They don't want to live to work, they want to work to live," Kirk said. "They are not becoming unemployed. That's not the story. They are finding something better."

STRIKE SURGE: BOOSTING BARGAINING POWER

Similar factors that have fueled the "Great Resignation" are driving the strike and protest movements - and in both cases workers may be gaining leverage.

A comeback by organized labor would certainly mark a historic development considering the decline of unions across the US in the past few decades. The labor statistics bureau has estimated that in 2020 only 10 percent of the US workforce was unionized - about half of what it was in the 1980s. However, labor representatives and experts have warned that it is easy to lose this advantage.

Labor organizer Bill Fletcher Jr. said it is important to remember that the US experienced two things at the same time: a global pandemic - which closed down most economic activity in the United States - and a minor depression that came as a result.

These dynamics, Fletcher explained, have strengthened the bargaining hand of unions and workers as the demand for labor has outstripped the number of people available to fill those positions.

The new power dynamic comes after about 40 years of stagnation and a decline in living standards for workers, Fletcher said. There was an immiserization of the working class and workers were getting more discontented - but now things have changed.

[&]quot;The pandemic made people slow down and think about their experiences," Monlouis said.

[&]quot;There was nothing to numb their experiences."

"The bargaining position of unions has increased and of the union rank-and-file," Fletcher said.
"These moments happen periodically but they don't last eternally. It has to do with the economic

That makes organizing really critical right now, Fletcher added.

"During the George Floyd protests people got into the streets and mobilized but didn't build an organization," he said. "They made demands for the government to change and we won but the other side started pushing back on things like police reform and critical race theory."

And now, he said, the same thing is happening in labor.

cycle."

"The employer class comes back with a vengeance. The inability of people to organize is a fundamental problem," Fletcher said.

Kirk cited Lenin's writings about spontaneous actions by the working class. Usually these outbursts are rooted in immediate needs not restructuring society, Kirk claimed.

"The vanguard party is responsible for raising consciousness about remaking society," Kirk said.

"We recognize and applaud the spontaneous action by workers against oppression but for it to come to something else what is needed?"

Real and substantive change will not come without strategy and organizing, Kirk argued.

"We need agency for it to become something more. Where is the agenda going to come from?" he asked. "The labor union writ large? Organizations not necessarily a part of labor [movement] like Black Lives Matter or the Immigrant Rights movement? The question is, where does this go?"

Bayard said the job exodus and spate of strikes illustrate that workers are clearly frustrated with the economic system and economic structure that they see is not tilted in their favor.

"There is a normal upside because they're willing to hear arguments about how things can be different. It's a combination of the economy and questioning the structure," Bayard said.

"Workers want to know when things will change for them after a once-in-a 100-year pandemic." Monlouis said the United States is a unique case because of how little protection workers have had, hence, she is not surprised about the unionizing efforts. Many, she added, fail to understand the scope of what is happening in the United States as more and more workers seek complete independence and greater control over their lives.

And, in the end, Monlouis warned that employers will likely not be able to catch up to the sheer numbers of workers she anticipates will walk out that proverbial door.

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Seven Schools in Haitian Capital Forced to Pay Gangs for Security Since September - UNICEF

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - At least seven schools in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince have been forced to pay armed criminal groups for security since the beginning of the school year in September, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in a statement. "Since the beginning of the school year in September, at least seven schools in and around the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince have already been forced to pay armed gangs in return for security and more have been threatened," UNICEF said Tuesday.

Most of the targeted schools have been in parts of the city controlled by armed criminal gangs, and the amount of money demanded by the groups is typically equal to the school fees of three students per class, UNICEF said.

Last week, UNICEF Chief of Communications in Haiti, Ndiaga Seck, told Sputnik that Haiti is currently in a state of chaos as a result of gang-related violence and kidnapping. This year, increased gang criminality has limited access to schools and prevented hundreds of children from starting or resuming their education, according to UNICEF.

17 Christian missionaries were abducted and taken hostage during a trip to an orphanage outside the capital city, Port-au-Prince in October. The missionaries were reportedly kidnapped by an armed gang known as 400 Mawozo, who are known for extorting businesses and ransoming kidnapped victims.

UNICEF called upon the Haitian government to take action to ensure security in and around schools and address gang violence against children.

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US State Dept. Raises Travel Advisory for Ethiopia to Level 4 - Do Not Travel

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The US State Department in a statement said it raised the travel advisory for Ethiopia to level four, warning the American public not to travel to the country.

"The Department of State raised the Travel Advisory Level for Ethiopia to Level 4 – Do Not Travel on November 2, 2021," the advisory said on Tuesday. "This replaces the previous Travel Advisory issued on June 7, 2021."

The advisory said the level four warning is due to the ongoing armed conflict, civil unrest, communications disruptions, and the potential for terrorism and kidnapping in border areas.

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US Vaccine Advisory Committee Recommends Pfizer COVID Vaccine for Children 5-11 Years Old

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted unanimously to recommend the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for children between five and 11 years old. "The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for children 5-11 years of age in the US population under the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization," ACIP recommended on Tuesday.

The recommendation passed unanimously with 14 votes in favor.

On Monday, White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator Jeffrey Zients said Pfizer is shipping the first seven million vaccine doses out of the total of 15 million doses intended for children aged five to 11, after the US Food and Drug Administration provided emergency use authorization last week.

The recommendation comes after The BMJ reported that clinical researchers involved with the phase III trials of the Pfizer vaccine, including those in children and young adults, engaged in poor scientific practices such as data falsification and inadequately trained vaccinators.

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US, Israeli Defense Chiefs Discuss Coordinating Efforts to Address Iran's Nuclear Program

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Israeli Defense Minister Benjamin Gantz said he had a telephone call with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to coordinate on efforts to address Iran's progress with its nuclear program.

"I had an important discussion with my friend and partner Austin about US-Israel coordination vis-a-vis Iranian regional entrenchment and its nuclear aspirations," Gantz said via Twitter on Tuesday.

Gantz added he and Austin agreed to meet soon for further talks on strategic issues and military cooperation.

Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said in a separate press statement that Austin reaffirmed the United States' commitment to cooperate to address security challenges in the Middle East. On Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh said Tehran will announce the date of resuming the Vienna-hosted talks this week after consulting all parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), primarily China.

The Biden administration said it may be possible to quickly reach a deal to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement.

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US Government Launches Lawsuit to Stop Random House Buying Rival Publisher - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The US government has initiated a lawsuit to block the purchase of the Simon & Schuster publishing firm by its rival Penguin Random House, the Department of Justice announced in a press release.

"The Department of Justice filed a civil antitrust lawsuit today to block Penguin Random House's proposed acquisition of its close competitor, Simon & Schuster," the release said on Tuesday. The complaint filed in the US District Court for the District of Columbia alleges that the acquisition would enable Penguin Random House, the largest book publisher in the world, to

exert "outsized influence" over which books are published in the United States and how much authors are paid, the release said.

In stopping Penguin Random House from extending its control of the US publishing market, the lawsuit would prevent further consolidation in an industry that has a history of collusion," Acting Assistant Attorney General Richard Powers of the Justice Department's Antitrust Division said in the release.

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Biden to Decide Whether to Declare New Nuclear Arsenal Policy This Month - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The White House is planning to hold a score of National Security Council meetings later this month to decide on a new policy for the US nuclear arsenal, including possibly limiting the use of such a weapon to deterrence or retaliatory strike cases only, The Washington Post reported citing senior administration officials familiar with the discussions.

In 2017, the Obama administration stopped short of adopting the policy known as "sole purpose" meaning that the US nuclear arsenal can be used only to deter or retaliate. The concept was also advocated by then-Vice President Joe Biden.

During his presidential campaign in 2020, Biden reiterated his commitment to put his belief in a "sole purpose" into practice while consulting with the US allies and military, the report said on Tuesday.

"The US will continue to maintain a safe, secure, and effective strategic deterrent while ensuring our extended deterrence commitments to allies and partners remain strong and credible," one of the senior administration officials said as quoted by the report.

At the same time, Biden has never voiced support for a "no first use" policy and the upcoming meetings' agenda does not include an option to declare this policy pledge, according to the report.

The prospect of limiting the use of US nuclear arsenal has always been opposed by the Republican lawmakers as well as some of the Washington allies, the report said.

The officials will also discuss whether to scrap new nuclear capabilities approved under the Trump administration, according to the report.

British Secretary of State for Defense Ben Wallace in July underscored that the United Kingdom would not welcome a "no first use" or "sole purpose" declaration by the United States.

Besides Britain, France, Germany, Japan and Australia are among those US allies opposing the change of the American policy on the nuclear weapons, the Financial Times reported earlier this week.

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Biden Nominates Wall Street Critic Omarova to Serve as Banking Watchdog at Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has nominated Wall Street critic Saule Omarova, who was born in the former Soviet Union and graduated from Moscow State University, to serve as a top banking watchdog at the US Treasury Department, the White House said in a release.

"NOMINATION SENT TO THE SENATE: Saule T. Omarova, of New York, to be Comptroller of the Currency for a term of five years, vice Joseph Otting," the release said on Tuesday. Biden's decision to nominate Omarova has received much criticism from various quarters on account of her leftist views. In particular, she suggested moving consumer banking from private institutions to the Federal Reserve and reducing the size of large banks. Banks have since actively lobbied against her nomination.

Republican Senator Pat Toomey has asked Omarova to turn over a copy of her thesis - "Karl Marx's Economic Analysis and the Theory of Revolution in The Capital," to allow the US Senate Banking Committee to fully assess her nomination.

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Biden Says Democrat McAuliffe Will Win Virginia Race for Governor

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said he thinks Democrat Terry McAuliffe will win in the "tight" race against Republican Glenn Youngkin for governor of the state of Virginia.

"I think we're going to win in Virginia. I think... it's going to be a tight race," Biden said on Tuesday during his press briefing at the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow. The president said he expected the final results to be announced after midnight and the outcome will depend on the voters' turnout.

"I think we're gonna win New Jersey as well," Biden added, referring to the governor elections in the state where Democratic incumbent Phil Murphy is leading in the race against Republican nominee Jack Ciatarelli.

Virginia's and New Jersey's elections are seen as representative of national political trends as they are held a year after Biden beat former President Donald Trump.

After the Delta surge, the US abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan in August and disagreements among Congress Democratic members on Biden's infrastructure bill, the president's approval rating has fallen down to 42 percent.

The figure is lower than any other modern first-year president's rating at a similar point in time - except for Trump, according to the most recent national NBC News poll.

Besides the idea that its results might be interpreted as an early test of Biden, the race is also believed to have the ability to set the tone for 2022 US midterm elections and the 2024 presidential race, which is anticipated to see Trump running for office again.

In 2017, Democrats won the governorships in both Virginia and New Jersey following the election of Trump a year before the race.

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Russia Wants US to Resolve Moscow's Uncertainty of Its First-Use Policy - Senior Official

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Russia wants the United States to take steps to resolve Moscow's uncertainties with its first-use policy, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said during a virtual panel discussion on US-Russia relations.

"In terms of doctrines, I would say we are concerned by the fact that in recent years, the US side deliberately introduced additional ambiguity into the issue what might be the circumstances under which possible use of nuclear weapons would be conceivable, we need more certainty here," Ryabkov said on Tuesday during an event hosted by Fort Ross Conservancy and the Kennan Institute.

Ryabkov pointed out that Russia and the United States are working to elevate the nuclear threshold between the two countries and Moscow hopes Washington will reflect it in its ongoing Nuclear Posture Review.

In addition, Ryabkov said that Russia believes further talks with the United States on arms control and strategic stability will lessen the risk of unimaginable developments between the two countries.

Presidents Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden met in Geneva on June 16. The summit resulted in a landmark agreement to launch negotiations on strategic stability.

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US, Malaysia Military Drills Through November 11 to Feature Jungle Operations - Army

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The US and Malaysian military launched Exercise Keris Strike this week featuring jungle warfare, the US Army Pacific said.

"This year marks the 25th iteration of the exercise which contributes to enhancing US and Malaysian defense readiness and tactical interoperability while strengthening bilateral relationships," the US Army Pacific said in a press release on Tuesday.

Approximately 27 US personnel will participate in this year's exercise consisting of jungle operations and squad-level tactics, the release said.

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UPDATE - Wall Street's Record Run Continues for 3rd Day as US Stimulus Taper Looms

NEW YORK, November 2 (Sputnik) - Wall Street hit record highs for a third day in a row on Tuesday as investors celebrated sterling third-quarter profits at most publicly-traded American corporations, even as naysayers urged caution ahead of the Federal Reserve's widely-expected tapering of its long-running pandemic-era stimulus.

All three of the major US equity indexes - the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq Composite - hit all-time highs, extending their peaks since October's last trade on Friday, amid blockbuster profits for most American corporations in the banking to healthcare, auto, technology and entertainment sectors.

The Dow, a blue-chip index which groups mostly industrial stocks, closed up 139 points, or 0.4%, at 36,053, after a record high at 36,089.

The S&P 500, which represents the top 500 US stocks, rose 18 points, or 0.4%, to finish at 4,631 after peaking at 4,635.

Nasdaq, which groups Big Tech names such as Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, finished up 54 points, or 0.3%, at 15,650.

"For today at least, the name of the game is earnings," TD Ameritrade said in a stock market commentary. "Whether the strong start to November will continue is uncertain in this historically strong-performing month, but if it does, it will be the result of how it fares in the face of earnings results, Fed policy, economic reports and whatever other news we are confronted with." Tuesday's rally came ahead of the Federal Reserve's two-day policy meeting, where the US central bank is expected to finalize the tapering of some \$15 billion a month from its monthly bond buying of \$120 billion which began at the height of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. Naysayers of the bull market have warned about an impending crash from the withdrawal of the Fed's stimulus, however gradual that may be.

The US economy shrank 3.5% for all of 2020 due to shutdowns and other disruptions caused by the COVID-19 crisis. Growth this year has been spotty, with an annualized 3.5% expansion in the first quarter, 3.6% in the second and 2.0% in the third.

The Federal Reserve envisions a 6.5% expansion for all of this year, although some officials at the central bank have more ambitious expectations, forecasting growth of up to 7.0%. The problem for the Fed though is inflation as wages and the price of almost everything, from coffee to oil and building materials, have soared from the lows of the pandemic.

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Researchers Engaged in Poor Scientific Practices in Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine Trial- Reports

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Researchers involved with the clinical trials for Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine engaged in poor scientific practices that compromised the integrity of the data, The BMJ reported, citing a former employee of the research organization.

The Ventavia Research Group falsified data, unblinded patients, employed inadequately trained vaccinators and was slow to follow up on adverse events reported in Pfizer's pivotal phase III trial, former regional director Brook Jackson said, according to the report on Tuesday.

Jackson emailed a complaint to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) following complaints from fellow employees who were overwhelmed by the volume of problems they were finding during the research. She was later fired by Ventavia later that same day, the reports said. Ventavia, which bills itself as the largest privately owned clinical research company in Texas, reportedly discarded used needles in plastic bags instead of dedicated sharps containers and left materials with trial participants' personal information out in the open, according to photos reportedly given to The BMJ by Jackson.

Jackson said that she received a call from an FDA inspector to discuss the report she emailed the organization, but heard nothing further following the call.

Two other former Ventavia employees spoke to The BMJ on condition of anonymity and confirmed broadly aspects of Jackson's allegations of poor scientific research practices by the company, adding that they persisted after Jackson was fired.

One of the former employees said they had worked on over four dozen clinical trials in their career, but that none had the sort of "helter skelter" work environment that the Pfizer trial at Ventavia had.

Pfizer has hired Ventavia as a research subcontractor for four other vaccine clinical trials since Jackson reported the alleged problems to the FDA: a trial for COVID-19 vaccines in children and young adults, in pregnant women and as a booster dose, as well as a Respiratory Syncytial Virus vaccine.

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US Marshals Service Says Washington, DC Jail Facility Fails to Meet Minimum Standards

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The Central Treatment Facility (CTF) of the Washington, DC jail failed to meet minimum standards upon surprise inspection, the US Marshals Service (USMS) said in a statement.

"During the week of October 18, the US Marshal for the District of Columbia conducted an unannounced inspection of the District of Columbia Department of Corrections (DC COC) facilities... The US Marshal's inspection of CTF revealed that conditions there do not meet the minimum standards of confinement as prescribed by the Federal Performance-Based Detention Standards," the statement said on Tuesday.

All of the facility's roughly 400 inmates are being removed based on a decision by USMS leadership. The prisoners will be transferred to US Penitentiary Lewisburg in Pennsylvania by US Marshals, the statement said.

The USMS informed the DC COC of its findings during the inspection, and will work with them to initiate a corrective action plan, the statement added.

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Russia Calls Upon US to Increase Consular Presence in Embassy in Moscow - Diplomat

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Russia urges the United States to increase the number of its consular personnel at the US embassy in Moscow to resume basic services, including issuing visas, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said during the Fort Ross Dialogue.

"The US diplomatic and consular presence is now diminished to a level where it's simply not possible to offer some very basic services of consular character like issuing visas to Russian citizens which need to travel to the US," Ryabkov said on Tuesday. "We invite and urge the US side to augment the US Embassy in Moscow and send more officers to at least ensure that consular service here in Russia is somewhat normalized."

In late April, Moscow banned the US embassy from hiring Russian citizens. The move came after the US imposed sanctions on 32 Russian entities and individuals over alleged cyberattacks and other hostile acts and ordered 10 Russian diplomats out.

In October, Washington requested that 55 Russian diplomats and administrative and technical workers of the Russian embassy and consulates leave the United States in the coming months.

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US-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue to Resume in Coming Weeks - Deputy Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The US-Russia strategic stability dialogue is set to continue within the coming weeks and will intensify the base of the dialogue, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said.

"It will be continued within weeks from now and we will intensify the base of our dialogue," Ryabkov said during the Fort Ross Dialogue on Tuesday.

Ryabkov explained that Russia has established an extensive agenda to develop the strategic dialogue with the United States and formed two working groups - a group on principles and objectives of the future arms control and a group on capabilities and actions - with a potential strategic stability effect.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart Joe Biden met in Geneva on June 16. The top-level summit covered such issues on the bilateral agenda as cybersecurity and diplomatic personnel, and resulted in a landmark agreement to launch negotiations on strategic stability.

Earlier on Tuesday, Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev met with CIA Director William Burns in Moscow to discuss the US-Russia relations.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik)

CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMIT

- * UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Tuesday he was "cautiously optimistic" over the progress achieved at the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP26) in Glasgow.
- * When asked by Sputnik whether he met with Russian partners on the sidelines of the climate summit in Glasgow, US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry said that he would not comment on this yet.
- * Japan plans to allocate up to \$10 billion within the next five years to support effort toward Asia's decarbonization and to double its financial aid to foreign countries' fight against climate change and natural disasters to \$14.8 billion, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced on Tuesday at the COP26 summit in Glasgow.

BIDEN'S NEWS CONFERENCE IN GLASGOW

- * US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that Russia and the members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are partially responsible for the rising gas and oil prices in the United States because they refused to produce more oil.
- * Biden said that there is no set date for his virtual meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping yet.
- * Biden said that he is not concerned about a possible armed conflict with China, adding that he does not anticipate there will be a need for a physical confrontation.

US-RUSSIA RELATIONS

- * CIA Director William Burns will hold in Moscow on November 2 and 3 a number of meetings with Russian government officials to discuss bilateral relations, the US Embassy in Moscow told RIA Novosti.
- * Patrushev met with Burns in Moscow, the council said, adding that the sides talked about the Russia-US relations.

* Russia is seeing small but positive steps in relations with the United States, Russian Ambassador in Washington Anatoly Antonov said.

SUDAN DEVELOPMENTS

* The United States is in contact with several countries, including Russia and the United Arab Emirates, to restore a civilian government in Sudan, US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman said on Tuesday at a briefing.

TERRORIST ATTACK IN KABUL

- * The attack on a hospital in the Afghan capital of Kabul was staged by the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia), Bakhtar news agency reported on Tuesday.
- * The death toll following the attack on a hospital in Kabul increased to 23, a source in the hospital told Sputnik, adding that 50 people got injured.

FLIGHT MH-17 CASE

- * Russian Ambassador to the Netherlands Alexander Shulgin refuted as groundless Dutch media reports about alleged threats that families of the MH17 crash victims face.
- * The investigation into the MH17 crash case is one-sided and keeps ignoring some circumstances, Shulgin said.
- * The compensation claims of the relatives of the victims of the 2014 crash of MH17 flight in eastern Ukraine will be considered by a Dutch court in December, presiding judge Hendrik Steenhuis said at a hearing.

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ICAO Unlikely to Present Ryanair Incident Report in November - Russian Envoy

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) will unlikely submit its final report on the Ryanair flight that landed in Belarus by mid-November as was previously expected and may postpone doing so until the beginning of the next year, Russian Envoy to ICAO Sergey Gudkov told Sputnik.

"Indeed, I have no confidence that the final report will be presented to the ICAO Secretariat Commission of Inquiry on November 13," Gudkov said. "I believe that they will inform us all again that the process of collecting information is ongoing and the final analysis will be presented at the next session of the ICAO Council at the next 225 Session of the ICAO Council in January-February 2022."

Last week, The Belarusian Ministry of Transport said it was not sure that the ICAO will be able to prepare the final report on the Rynair plane emergency landing at the Minsk airport during its current session.

Also last week, Gudkov told Sputnik that ICAO can consider the report on November 12 if it receives all the necessary information by that date.

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Russia-US Relations More Dangerous Today Than During Cold War - Ryabkov

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The state of Russian-US relations is more dangerous and riskier today than during the Cold War period due to the absence of clear rules and frameworks, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Tuesday.

"Today's state of Russia-US relations is more dangerous because of the fact that at that time there were clear frameworks and clear rules. Now, there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding all these and this is quite risky," Ryabkov said during the Fort Ross Dialogue. The diplomat reaffirmed Russia's commitment to preventing any risk of unintended use of nuclear weapons as well as to diminishing probability of deliberate use of them. Earlier in the day, Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev held talks with CIA Director William Burns in Moscow to discuss bilateral relations.

Presidents Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden met in Geneva on June 16. The top-level summit resulted in a landmark agreement to launch negotiations on strategic stability.

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Over Three-Fourths of US Adults Say Pandemic to Continue at Least 1 More Year - Poll

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - Nearly three in five Americans say the COVID-19 crisis will last for more than a year, including more than a quarter who believe the pandemic will never end, a new Quinnipiac University poll revealed on Tuesday.

"An overwhelming majority of Americans (81 percent) do not expect life to return to normal in the U.S. anytime soon, as 26 percent say life will never return to normal, 32 percent expect it will take more than 1 year for life to return to normal, 23 percent say it will take about a year," a press release explaining the poll said.

Another 10 percent expect life to return to normal in about 6 months and 4 percent say a couple of months, the release said.

Pandemic-related pessimism tracks closely with dour expectations for the US economy, with more than half of Americans (55 percent) saying conditions are getting worse and 28 percent saying conditions are staying the same, the release added.

The poll is based on an October 15-18 survey of 1,342 US adults, according to the release.

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Wall Street's Record Run Continues for 3rd Day as US Stimulus Taper Decision Looms

NEW YORK, November 2 (Sputnik) - Wall Street hit record highs for a third day in a row on Tuesday as investors celebrated sterling third-quarter profits at most publicly-traded American corporations, even as naysayers urged caution ahead of the Federal Reserve's widely expected tapering of its long-running pandemic-era stimulus.

All three of the major US equity indexes - the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq Composite - hit all-time highs, extending their peaks since October's last trade on Friday.

The Dow, a blue-chip index which groups mostly industrial stocks, closed up 139 points, or 0.4%, at 36,053 after a record high at 36,089.

The S&P 500, which represents the top 500 US stocks, rose 18 points, or 0.4%, to finish at 4,631 after peaking at 4,635.

The Nasdaq Composite, which groups Big Tech names such as Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, finished up 54 points, or 0.3%, at 15,650.

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Researchers Engaged in Poor Scientific Practices in Pfizer COVID Vaccine Trial - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Researchers involved with the clinical trials for Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine engaged in poor scientific practices that compromised the integrity of the data, The BMJ reported on Tuesday, citing a former employee of the research organization. The Ventavia Research Group falsified data, unblinded patients, employed inadequately trained vaccinators and was slow to follow up on adverse events reported in Pfizer's pivotal phase III trial, former regional director Brook Jackson said according to the report.

Jackson emailed a complaint to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) following complaints from fellow employees who were overwhelmed by the volume of problems they were finding during the research. She was later fired by Ventavia later that same day, the reports said. Ventavia, which bills itself as the largest privately owned clinical research company in Texas, reportedly discarded used needles in plastic bags instead of dedicated sharps containers and left materials with trial participants' personal information out in the open, according to photos reportedly given to The BMJ by Jackson.

Jackson said that she received a call from an FDA inspector to discuss the report she emailed them, but heard nothing further from them after that.

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UN Chief Concerned By Violence in Ethiopia, State of Emergency Declaration - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, November 2 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is very concerned by the uptick in violence in Ethiopia where the government declared a six-month state of emergency, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday. Earlier in the day, Ethiopia declared a state of emergency following the Tigray People's Liberation Front's (TPLF) announcement about its territorial gains in the embattled Tigray region and consideration to march on the capital of Addis Ababa.

"The Secretary-General is extremely concerned by the escalation of violence in Ethiopia and the recent declaration of a state of emergency," Dujarric said in a statement.

The United Nations spokesperson also said that Guterres reiterated his call on the parties to immediately stop any hostilities and commit to an inclusive national dialogue to end the war.

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US Lawmakers Reach Deal to Trim Prescription Drug Prices for Seniors, Families - Schumer

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - An agreement to reduce US prescription drug prices, including a reduction of the price of insulin from \$600 a dose to \$35, was announced by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer on Tuesday.

The deal would allow Medicare, the US universal healthcare program for seniors, to negotiate drug prices directly with pharmaceutical companies and also cap out-of-pocket drug expenses at \$2,000 per year, Schumer said at a weekly news briefing with Senate Democrats.

"We've heard this from people across the country, who have serious illnesses and can't afford their medicine. Today we've taken a massive step forward in helping alleviate that problem," he said.

Schumer explained that the drug-pricing measure will be included in the Democrats' \$1.75 trillion social spending package, restoring an item that reportedly had been removed earlier by House negotiators.

American consumers pay some of the world's highest drug prices, which pharmaceutical firms say is needed to recoup massive development costs.

But critics charge drug makers turn around and offer steep discounts to consumers in other nations that directly negotiate drug prices, without commensurate cuts in costs to Americans. While Schumer offered few other details, he said the deal will end the days when a live-changing diagnosis means thousands upon thousands of dollars in new drug expenses.

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US to Directly Engage With China on Industrial Policies, Protect Workers - Trade Chief

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States will deal directly with China on industrial policies and take steps to shield American workers from unfair competition, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said Tuesday.

"We will directly engage with China on its industrial policies, but we will also take all steps necessary to protect ourselves against the waves of damage inflicted over the years through unfair competition," Tai said in a speech prepared for delivery at the American Iron and Steel Institute and Steel Manufacturers Association's general meeting.

Tai noted that China was the biggest driver of the global overcapacity in steel and has poured billions of dollars into its steel industry, hurting the interests of workers in America and around the world.

The gap between global steelmaking capacity and global demand, as estimated by the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity, was at nearly 600 million tons last year and is expected to grow, with 114 million tons of new capacity being under construction or planned over the next several years, she continued.

"China alone produced over one billion metric tons of steel annually, accounting for nearly 60% of global steel production," she said. "We all know this is not sustainable. We need to be prepared to deploy all tools and explore the development of new ones, including through collaboration with other economies and countries."

She cited as example the effort by the US and Europe to address the overcapacity in global steel and aluminum via an agreement to allow the resumption of duty-free European steel and aluminum into the United States.

Under the pact, the US and the European Union will analyze the volume of steel and aluminum imports from the bloc each year and share information and best practices on trade remedies, while ensuring that products from non-market economies do not benefit from the arrangement.

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Biden Pins Blame on Russia, OPEC for Rising Gas Prices in US

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that Russia and the members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are partially responsible for the rising gas and oil prices in the United States because they refused to produce more oil.

"First of all, the significant reason why prices are up is because of COVID affecting the supply chain. If you take a look at... gas prices, and you take a look at oil prices, that is a consequence of thus far the refusal of Russia or the OPEC nations to pump more oil," Biden said in a press conference on the sidelines of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow.

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Biden Says Does Not Have Exact Date Yet for Virtual Meet With China's Xi

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that there is no set date for his virtual meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping yet.

"I am going to be having a virtual summit him," Biden said during the climate summit. "We haven't set the exact date yet."

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Biden Says Not Worried About Possibility of Armed Conflict With China

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that he is not concerned about a possible armed conflict with China, adding that he does not anticipate there will be a need for a physical confrontation.

"With regard to more profound question about am I worried of armed conflict or some bad accidentally occurring with China, No, I am not," Biden said. "I don't anticipate there will be a need for... a physical conflict."

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Yahoo Pulls Out of China Citing 'Challenging' Business, Legal Environment - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Internet search engine Yahoo is pulling out of China due to the country's increasingly challenging business and legal environment, the company said in a statement on Tuesday.

"In recognition of the increasingly challenging business and legal environment in China, Yahoo's suite of services will no longer be accessible from mainland China as of November 1," a Yahoo spokesperson said as quoted by The Wall Street Journal.

Yahoo is the second US technology firm to downsize operations there in less than a month following the closure of Microsoft Corp.'s LinkedIn social-networking site. In mid-October Microsoft Corp.'s LinkedIn said it was leaving China due to the country's tougher censorship regulations.

The Yahoo pullout comes on the very same day as the implementation of China's Personal Information Protection Law, which curbs data collection by technology companies.

According to The Wall Street Journal report, operationally, Yahoo's China departure was largely symbolic, as the company had already begun shutting down its main services such as email, news and community services in China starting in 2013.

Notwithstanding that, the report added, the exit was a reminder of the increasing challenges foreign companies faced in China from tighter data security and privacy regulations, geopolitical tensions, and tough Covid-19-related rules.

Trudeau Says 'Confident' World Will Stay on Track to Limit Warming to 1.5 Degrees Celsius

UNITED NATIONS, November 2 (Sputnik) - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Tuesday said he is confident the global community will be able to reach the Paris Agreement's goal to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

"I am confident we're going to be able to stay on that track to 1.5 because I am confident we are going to continue to keep pushing ourselves and each other to be more and more ambitious," Trudeau said at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26).

Trudeau said the ongoing efforts to push on the development of green technologies, clean economy and support for the developing nations to reduce emissions will allow the world to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

The goal to limit the rise in the mean global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels, is set out in the Paris Agreement on climate change, adopted by 196 parties during the UN Climate Change Conference in France in 2015.

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US Senators Eager to Know Carbon Footprint of Biden's Trip to Climate Summit - Letter

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – US Republican senators Joni Ernst, Tom Cotton and Shelley Capito consider President Joe Biden's trip to the climate summit in Europe to be "hypocrisy", and demand that his administration provide an estimate of the amount of carbon emissions from his transportation to and from the high-level event.

"We write to you today requesting that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) collect and provide information to Congress on the total amount of carbon emissions required to transport President Biden, the 13 U.S. political appointees, and any and all Administration support staff who attend this conference," the senators wrote in a letter to GAO on Tuesday. "Hypocrisy Alert. While Pres. Biden continues to target energy with harmful policies, he & his staff are continuing to rely on fossil-fuel transportation," Ernst said in a tweet.

The senators also criticize Biden for revoking permit for the Keystone pipeline and temporarily prohibiting the sale of oil and gas leases on federal lands as well as lifting sanctions on Russia allowing it to complete the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

Earlier on Tuesday, Biden announced that the United States has launched together with its 75 partners a 4 billion-dollar investment plan to battle climate change.

From October 31 to November 12, world leaders, including Biden, are participating in COP26 in Glasgow to address issues pertaining to climate change.

In April, Biden announced that the United States would halve greenhouse emissions by 2030 as part of its new commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement, which his predecessor, Donald Trump, abandoned in 2017.

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Blinken Meets With Zelenskyy, Vows to Uphold Ukraine's Energy Security - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has reaffirmed the Biden administration's commitment to strengthening energy security of the Eastern European country and reducing alleged risks associated with the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy today in Glasgow on the margins of COP26," Price said in a press release. "He welcomed Ukraine's steps to address corruption and underscored that, together with our allies and partners, the United States would continue to reinforce Ukrainian energy security, including by reducing the risks posed by the Nord Stream 2 pipeline."

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US to Build Small Nuclear Reactor in Romania to Address Climate Change - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States is going to build a first ever small nuclear reactor in Romania in a bid to address climate change and growing demand for clean energy in Europe, the US State Department said on Tuesday.

"Today, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry and Romanian President Klaus lohannis announced Romania's intent to build a first-of-a-kind US small modular reactor (SMR) plant," the State Department said in a press release. "This pioneering initial step by Romania will build significant momentum for reducing emissions across Europe."

The "multi-billion-dollar" deal will allow Romania to begin the process of gradually replacing its seven coal power plants while the total number of such plants in the region is 30, the release said.

The modular nature SMRs provides for scalability, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness. Such nuclear modules can also be integrated with other clean energy sources, the release added.

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Minneapolis Referendum Not to Defund, Dismantle Police Department if Passed - Activist

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - A referendum to change the Minneapolis Police Department to the Department of Public Safety, voted on by the city's residents on Tuesday, will not defund or dismantle the police, referendum activist Erika Thorne told Sputnik.

"Despite what many people have said, this is not about defunding the police. It's not about dismantling the police. It's about putting the police in a more proper position to respond when we do need people with guns for a situation," Thorne said.

Minneapolis residents are voting in a referendum to change the existing police department to the Department of Public Safety, which would combine social and medical workers with peace officers to take a comprehensive public health approach to safety. The measure will need support from 51% of the Minneapolis residents in order to pass.

Thorne said some situations involving the homeless, drug addicts and those in mental health crises do not require people with guns to respond. Rather, they require trained professionals who can guide the individuals to safer places to recover, Thorne added.

The organizational culture of the police department is also racist and targets people of color, including indigenous people and recent East African immigrants to the city, Thorne said. Minneapolis has been the epicenter of protests following the killing of George Floyd, a 47-year old black man, by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin.

Chauvin was found guilty of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter, and sentenced to 22 years in prison for his role in the death of Floyd.

Some police reforms called for by residents of Minneapolis have been implemented over the last several years, Thorne said. These include calls for body cameras on officers and de-escalation training. However, it's hard to find out what has actually been implemented, Thorne added.

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Israel, US 5th Fleet Launch 3 Week Amphibious Training Exercise Off Israeli Coast- CENTCOM

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - US and Israeli naval forces began a live fire bilateral training exercise based out of Israel's southernmost city of Eliat, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Tuesday.

"The exercise includes military operations in urban terrain, infantry live-fire training, High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) live-fire and rapid maneuvering training, as well as professional exchanges on various topics including engineering, medical and explosive ordinance disposal," a CENTCOM press release said.

Naval forces from the US 5th Fleet in the CENTCOM area of responsibility is leading US participation in the three-week exercise, which is based out of Eliat on the northern edge of the Red Sea's Gulf of Aqaba, the release added.

Participating US forces include approximately 500 personnel from the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, including one logistics battalion detachment, one infantry rifle company, a light armored reconnaissance company, and a HIMARS platoon, according to the release.

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US to Directly Engage With China on Industrial Policies, Protect Workers -Trade Chief Tai

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States will deal directly with China on industrial policies and take steps to shield US workers from unfair competition, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said on Tuesday.

"We will directly engage with China on its industrial policies, but we will also take all steps necessary to protect ourselves against the waves of damage inflicted over the years through unfair competition," Tai said in a speech prepared for delivery at the American Iron and Steel Institute and Steel Manufacturers Association general meeting.

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Prosecution, Defense Make Opening Statements in Trial of Kenosha Shooter Kyle Rittenhouse

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The prosecution and defense teams made their opening statements in the trial of shooter Kyle Rittenhouse at the Kenosha County Circuit Court on Tuesday, laying the groundwork for the homicide trial that is expected to take several weeks. Rittenhouse is tried for shooting three people, killing two, who attacked him during the Black Lives Matter riots in Kenosha, Wisconsin in August 2020. He is facing six charges, including first-degree reckless homicide with a dangerous weapon, recklessly endangering safety with a dangerous weapon and possession of a dangerous weapon by a person younger than 18 years. Rittenhouse shot and killed Anthony Huber and Joseph Rosenbaum, as well as wounded Gaige Grosskreutz in the arm during the riots.

The defense team argued that Rittenhouse shot the men in self-defense after being chased and attacked during the riots. The lawyers showed dozens of pictures and videos of the events preceding and during the shooting in order to make their case that Rittenhouse reasonably believed his life was in danger when he shot the three men.

The prosecution argued that Rittenhouse recklessly endangered the lives of the victims and others by carrying a firearm during the riots, which he attended while portraying himself as a medical official. They emphasized that Rittenhouse was the only person who killed anybody in Kenosha that night and that he is not protected by Wisconsin self-defense laws in this case. This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Mission, CAR Officials Discuss Probing Attack on Egyptian Peacekeepers - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, November 2 (Sputnik) - The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the country's government initiated a dialogue aimed at launching an investigation into the gunfire attack on ten peacekeepers by the CAR presidential guard, United Nations spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Tuesday. Earlier the day, MINUSCA said ten unarmed Egyptian peacekeepers from the mission's police unit were wounded, including two blue helmets who sustained severe injuries, by shots fired by the presidential guard in the afternoon of November 1.

"The leadership of our UN peacekeeping mission and members of the Central African Republic government immediately initiated a dialogue with the opening up the necessary investigation into this incident and to ensure accountability in accordance with the obligations under the agreement between United Nations and the government of the Central African Republic," Haq said during a press briefing.

The attack, which the UN mission said appears to be deliberate and unjustifiable, took place about 393 (120 meters) from the presidential residence in the capital of Bangui.

"The Egyptian police officers had landed at Bangui's airport earlier in the day... They were on their way to their base when they suffered heavy fire from members of the presidential guard," Haq said.

The police officers were fired at with no warning or response, Haq also said.

The bus that was transporting the blue helmets hit a woman who died. Later in the day, the MINUSCA delegation met with the victim's family to offer condolences and deplored the tragic accident, he added.

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Lockheed Martin to Market Israeli Air-to-Surface SPICE Precision Weapons to US, Poland

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The Israeli defense contractor Rafael will market its SPICE system, which converts unguided bombs to precision munitions, to the United States and Poland in a joint venture announced by Lockheed Martin on Tuesday.

"This agreement marks the first time SPICE 250 is available for sale to the US military," Lockheed Martin said in a press release.

The release also mentioned Poland as a potential customer.

SPICE products include two guidance kits, SPICE 1000 and SPICE 2000, as well as an all-around system, known as SPICE 250, the release said.

The systems are designed to operate when GPS signals are not available, the release added. This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Senators Raise Ethical Concerns Over Biden's Pick for Ambassador to Germany

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US Senators Marco Rubio, Ron Johnson and Ted Cruz on Tuesday sent a letter to the Senate Foreign Relation Committee raising concerns over US President Joe Biden nominating University of Pennsylvania President Amy Gutmann to be the next ambassador to Germany after she paid him more than \$900,000 during his times as a professor.

"We are concerned that Dr. Gutmann, who served as president of the University of Pennsylvania since 2004, does not have the experience necessary for this important diplomatic post," the letter said. "[W]e are deeply concerned that our allies will view Dr. Gutmann's nomination as a quid pro quo. It appears that President Biden could be rewarding a friend who previously provided him with more than \$900,000."

The lawmakers also said the nomination of Gutmann "raises serious questions, both substantively and ethically."

The senators said they are confident the position of the Benjamin Franklin Presidential Practice Professor that Biden had at the university did not require any active teaching and call it a "no-show" job.

Moreover, the senators cite a recent Philadelphia report that found the University of Pennsylvania received about \$258 million in foreign funds between 2013 and 2019 with the largest share coming from Chinese entities.

The letter also raised questions whether Gutmann can be trusted with public funds after she received \$3.9 million in total compensation in 2020 alone.

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Lockheed Martin, Verizon Partner on Secure 5G Communications for Pentagon - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Lockheed Martin and Verizon have joined forces to develop a new ultra-secure 5G integrated set of air, land, sea, space and cyber domain networks for the US Department of Defense (DOD), Verizon said on Tuesday.

"Verizon and Lockheed Martin have signed an agreement to collaborate on 5G.MIL technologies that will provide ultra-secure, reliable connections for US Department of Defense systems, bringing together high-tech platforms into a cohesive network spanning air, land, sea, space and cyber domains," Verizon said in a press release.

The strategic relationship agreement also establishes a joint research and development lab framework to prototype, demonstrate and test 5G.MIL technologies, the release said. "Lockheed Martin's deep understanding of DOD mission requirements coupled with Verizon's wireless expertise will truly enable the Joint All-Domain Operations battlespace our customers envision," Lockheed Martin Senior Vice President of Engineering and Technology Rod Makoske said.

Earlier this week, Lockheed Martin and Verizon conducted a joint demonstration using a Verizon private 5G network installed at Lockheed Martin Space's 5G Test Range in Colorado, connected

to a Lockheed Martin open mission system processor running mission applications at the Skunk Works Integration Facility and Test Center in Texas, the release noted.

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Biden Admin. Targets Veterans, Active Duty Military Suicides By Promoting Safe Gun Storage

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration sought to reduce US suicides in the military and among veterans by promoting safe methods to store guns, the White House said on Tuesday.

"The Biden administration's comprehensive military and veteran suicide prevention strategy released today, announces an unprecedented federal focus on improving lethal means safety as a tool to save lives," the White House said in a press release.

The initiative begins with instructions to six Cabinet agencies, including the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, to jointly create a plan for addressing gun storage "safety awareness, education, training and program evaluation," the release said.

The Biden administration is also proposing requiring gun sellers to offer safe storage devices to gun buyers - a proposal that could also extend beyond current and former service members to the general public, the release said.

In September, the Defense Department reported the suicide rate for active duty service members increased from 26.3 suicides per 100,000 forces in 2019, to 28.7 suicides per 100,000 in 2020. While the increase appears marginal, the rate was the highest since the military began compiling records on self-inflicted deaths in 2008, the release added.

Also in September, the Department of Veterans Affairs reported 6,261 veteran suicide deaths in 2019, a decrease of 399 from 2018, according to the release.

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Meta Says Will Shut Down Face Recognition System on Facebook in Coming Weeks

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Meta issued a statement on Tuesday saying that it has promised to shut down the face recognition system on its social media platform Facebook in the coming weeks.

"In the coming weeks, we will shut down the Face Recognition system on Facebook as part of a company-wide move to limit the use of facial recognition in our products. As part of this change, people who have opted in to our Face Recognition setting will no longer be automatically recognized in photos and videos, and we will delete the facial recognition template used to identify them," the statement said.

Biden Nominates Adm. Grady to Be Vice Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has nominated Adm. Chris Grady for the position vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Defense Department said on Tuesday.

"Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced today that the president has made the following nomination: Navy Adm. Christopher W. Grady for reappointment to the rank of admiral, and assignment as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," the Defense Department said in a statement.

Grady currently serves as commander of teh US Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia. If confirmed to the new position, he will succeed Air Force Gen. John Hyten, who is set to retire before the end of November.

The US Naval Institute said in a separate notice on Tuesday that the nomination was submitted to the US Senate Armed Serviced Committee the previous day.

. The White House chose among a list of contenders, including current US Strategic Command commander Adm. Charles Richard, the statement added, citing defense officials.

In 2016-2019, Grady commanded the US Sixth Fleet and assumed his current position to head the US Fleet Forces Command in February 2019.

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US Needs Bipartisan Congressional Panel to Probe Chaotic Afghanistan Withdrawal - Senator

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - Congress needs to form a bipartisan panel to probe why some Americans were killed and others were left behind during the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Senator Rick Scott said on Tuesday.

"VVe've got to figure out what happened in Afghanistan," Scott said. "VVe ought to have a bipartisan select committee, the House and the Senate and understand exactly what happened with this withdrawal so Americans will know exactly why Americans died right there and why so many Americans were left.

Approval of such a probe would require support from Democrats, who control both houses of Congress - an unlikely prospect given Democratic control of both houses of Congress. Scott's remarks came during a press conference in which Senate Republicans demanded Majority Leader Chuck Schumer schedule a debate and vote on the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Republican Senators accused Democrats of being so preoccupied with passing a \$1.75 trillion social spending bill that they delayed funding needed by the US military, despite growing threats from China, North Korea, Iran and other US adversaries.

Senate Democrats are struggling to win support from their entire 50 member caucus needed to approve the social spending package without a single Republican vote.

In contrast, the \$768 billion NDAA enjoys bipartisan support and analysts predict easy approval in the Senate once Schumer schedules a vote. In September, the House of Representatives passed the legislation on a 316-113 vote.

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Russia Sees Small But Positive Developments in Bilateral Relations With US - Antonov

(Updates with details, background in paras 5-10)

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Russia is seeing small but positive developments in the relations with the United States over the past year, Russian Ambassador in Washington Anatoly Antonov said on Tuesday.

"Over the past year, there have been some small, but still positive developments in the bilateral relations," Antonov said in the opening remarks for the 10th Fort Ross Dialogue. "US President Joe Biden accepted our proposal to extend the New START Treaty for five years without any conditions. In June, the heads of the two states held a summit in Geneva. The meeting had a busy agenda and was fruitful."

Antonov said that Russia and the United States also resumed professional dialogue on strategic stability and cybersecurity.

"Averting an arms race and practicing self-restraint in cyber-competition are critically important for normalizing bilateral ties and preventing escalation of tension into a real crisis," he said. "A sustainable dialogue is held through the Security Councils and Foreign Ministries. There are expert contacts on climate issues, the development and protection of the Arctic. Business interaction continues, bilateral trade is growing."

Antonov stressed, however, that these are just the first steps to recover the relations between Washington and Moscow, and there is a lot of work left to be done to establish the foundation for further progress.

"There is much holding the relations back. Problems abound," he said. "Our citizens face difficulties with visas. The Russian diplomatic property seized several years ago, including in San Francisco, has not yet been returned. Further sanctions are introduced."

Antonov said that Russia has proposed a positive plan of action.

"As a first step, we deem it necessary to nullify - on a reciprocal basis - all the restrictions on the diplomatic presence of each other," he said.

Antonov went in to say that currently Russia and the United States are at a crucial point of their bilateral relations and "must not lose this opportunity to translate the spirit of Geneva into practice."

"I am convinced that both countries should seek to promote a unifying agenda," he said. "The current international situation requires that long-needed and overdue decisions be taken to establish interaction on eliminating threats fraught with major human and economic losses. The

stakes are too high in combating international terrorism, proliferation of WMDs, climate change, escalation of regional conflicts and spread of deadly diseases."

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart Joe Biden met in Geneva on June 16. The top-level summit covered such issues on the bilateral agenda as cybersecurity and diplomatic personnel, and resulted in a landmark agreement to launch negotiations on strategic stability.

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US to Slash Methane Emission By 41Mln Tons Through 2035 - Environmental Protection Agency

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States will slash methane emissions by 41 million tons over the next 14 years, targeting the equivalent of the pollution caused by all US automobiles and commercial jets in 2019 as part of its commitment to the COP26 Summit, the Environmental Protection Agency said on Tuesday.

"As global leaders convene at this pivotal moment in Glasgow for COP26, it is now abundantly clear that America is back and leading by example in confronting the climate crisis with bold ambition," EPA Administrator Michael Regan said in a statement. "The proposed rule would reduce 41 million tons of methane emissions from 2023 to 2035, the equivalent of 920 million metric tons of carbon dioxide."

That would be the equivalent of the carbon dioxide emitted from all US passenger cars and commercial aircraft in 2019, Regan said. "In 2030 alone, the rule would reduce methane emissions from sources covered in the proposal by 74 percent compared to 2005," the statement said.

The EPA acknowledged that the US oil and natural gas industry was the largest industrial source of methane emissions, emitting more methane than the total emissions of all greenhouse gases from 164 countries combined.

Oil and natural gas operations also emit smog-forming volatile organic compounds (VOC) and toxic air pollutants such as benzene that harm public health, the statement said.

"EPA analyzed the proposed rule's impact on natural gas and oil prices from 2023 to 2035 and estimates that changes would be small - pennies per barrel of oil or thousand cubic feet of gas," the statement said.

On the part of the United States, the value of cumulative net climate benefits from the proposed rule, after taking into account the costs of compliance as well as savings from recovered natural gas, would be \$48 to \$49 billion from 2023 to 2035 - or the equivalent of about \$4.5 billion a year, the statement added.

The climate benefits were estimated using the social cost of greenhouse gases and represented the monetary value of avoided climate damages associated with a decrease in emissions of a greenhouse gas. In addition to the monetary benefits, EPA said it has estimated that from 2023 to 2025, the proposal would reduce VOC emissions by 12 million tons and hazardous air pollution by 480,000 tons.

SQUID Cryptocurrency Inspired By TV Game Show Collapses

NEW YORK, November 2 (Sputnik) - A cryptocurrency inspired by South Korean hit TV show Squid Game has lost its entire 230,000% gain in a week, prompting aggrieved investors to cry fraud.

Dubbed SQUID, in an unmistakable reference to the survival drama on streaming service Netflix, the cryptocurrency rose to as high as \$2,861.80 over the past week before plunging to zero by Tuesday's trade.

Regulators had not immediately responded to the collapse of the cryptocurrency, which many on Twitter called a scam.

"A lot of my normie friends bought this \$SQUID game token and couldn't sell," a Twitter user called Friend-of-Peach said. Normie is slang for "normal person."

SQUID was promoted as a play-to-earn cryptocurrency inspired by the fictional show in which people put their lives at risk to play a series of children's games for the opportunity to win 45.6 billion South Korean won (\$38.7 million).

The founders of SQUID had said they were affiliated with the Netflix show as its official token partner. The show's producers have not backed up the claim.

The cryptocurrency's founders also said they had entered a strategic partnership with CoinGecko, a crypto data provider.

However, in an interview with industry portal Cointelegraph, CoinGecko co-founder Bobby Ong refuted the claim, saying: "[SQUID] did not meet our listing criteria, hence it will not be listed on CoinGecko. It's most likely a scam."

Cointelegraph also reported on Tuesday that prior to the crash, traders had complained that they could not sell their SQUID holdings in the only available market, a decentralized exchange called PancakeSwap.

"In their defense, SQUID founders said they had deployed an innovative 'anti-dumping technology' that limits people from selling their tokens against lower demand," Cointelegraph said, adding: "It now appears like a "game over" scenario for the SQUID bag holders." SQUID is the latest debacle in the crypto industry, a \$2 trillion market where innumerable offerings are made daily to investors often lured by the idea of astronomical gains without adequate knowledge or skill to navigate such trades.

US regulators, including Securities and Exchange Commission Gary Gensler who calls crypto the "Wild West" of the financial world, have promised tough action against scammers in the business. New York Attorney General Letitia James has also fined and shut down numerous cryptocurrency offerings in the state.

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US Senators Question Biden Nominating Professor as Ambassador to Germany - Letter

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US Senators Marco Rubio, Ron Johnson and Ted Cruz on Tuesday sent a letter to the Senate Foreign Relation Committee raising concerns over US President Joe Biden nominating University of Pennsylvania Professor Amy Gutman to be the next ambassador to Germany after she paid him more than \$900,000 during her tenure. "We are concerned that Dr. Gutmann, who served as president of the University of Pennsylvania since 2004, does not have the experience necessary for this important diplomatic post," the letter said. "[W]e are deeply concerned that our allies will view Dr. Gutmann's nomination as a quid pro quo. It appears that President Biden could be rewarding a friend who previously provided him with more than \$900,000."

The senators said they are confident the position of the Benjamin Franklin Presidential Practice Professor thath Biden had at the university did not require any active teaching and call it a "no-show" job.

Moreover, the senators cited a recent Philadelphia report that found the University of Pennsylvania received about \$258 million in foreign funds between 2013 and 2019 with the largest share coming from Chinese entities.

The letter also raised questions whether Gutmann can be trusted with public funds after she received \$3.9 million in total compensation in 2020 alone.

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US Aviation Agency Issues Safety Notice Prior to Deploying 5G Networks in December

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said on Monday that it has issued a special airworthiness information bulletin with recommended steps for pilots and manufacturers to take prior to the deployment of 5G networks in the United States on December 5.

"Deployment of 5G wireless broadband networks scheduled for December 5 has risk of potential adverse effects on radio altimeters in aircraft. Requests from manufacturers and pilots included," the FAA said in the safety notice.

In February, the Federal Communications Commission issued licenses to several wireless network providers to use 5G frequencies, with conditions about deployment timing and parameters. The FCC will allow operations in certain sections of the 5G frequency band in 46 markets starting on December 5.

In preparation for the deployment, the FAA said it recommends that radio altimeter manufacturers complete analysis or testing of equipment either in production, supported, or still being employed, to determine the susceptibility to interference from 5G.

The FAA requested aircraft manufacturers to submit approximate numbers of each radio altimeter model installed on each aircraft currently in service in the US. They also requested that

they test and analyze the effects of loss of function, and erroneous or misleading radio altimeter data from potential harmful interference caused by 5G.

Pilots and other aircraft operators were recommended by the FAA to remind passengers that all portable electronic devices should be turned off, protected from accidental activation, and set to a non-transmitting mode or turned off, the notice said.

Operators were also told by the FAA to ensure their pilots are aware of the potential degradation of radio altimeter capabilities and any means to compensate for in-flight radio altimeter anomalies, including erroneous altimeter readings and loss of altimeter function, the notice added.

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Russia Sees Small, But Positive Developments in Relations With US - Antonov

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Russia is seeing small but positive steps in relations with the United States, Russian Ambassador in Washington Anatoly Antonov said on Tuesday. "Over the past year, there have been some small, but still positive developments in bilateral relations," Antonov said in the opening remarks for the 10th Fort Ross Dialogue. "U.S. President Joe Biden accepted our proposal to extend the New START Treaty for five years without any conditions. In June, the heads of the two states held a summit in Geneva. The meeting had a busy agenda and was fruitful."

Moreover, the two countries have resumed professional dialogue on strategic stability and cybersecurity, the diplomat added.

"Averting an arms race and practicing self-restraint in cyber-competition are critically important for normalizing bilateral ties and preventing escalation of tension into a real crisis," he said. "A sustainable dialogue is held through Security Councils and Foreign Ministries. There are expert contacts on climate issues, the development and protection of the Arctic. Business interaction continues, bilateral trade is growing."

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US Launches \$4Bln Investment Plan to Fight Climate Change Together With 75 Partners- Biden

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States has launched together with its 75 partners a 4 billion-dollar investment plan to battle climate change, US President Joe Biden announced on Tuesday.

"Today, along with 75 partners we are going to launch a 4 billion dollar initial investment globally. The United States is planning to mobilize a billion of that four billion over the next five years, and I invite all of you to join us, " the president said at the UN climate change conference in Glasgow.

Biden pledged that the United States will lead by example and share with the world its "considerable powers of innovation."

From October 31 to November 12, world leaders, including Biden, are participating in COP26 in Glasgow to address issues pertaining to climate change.

The United States returned to the Paris Climate Agreement in February soon after Biden became US president. Biden had vowed to double the nationally determined contribution announced under former President Barack Obama amounting to a cut of up to 28% of US emissions by 2025.

In April, Biden announced that the United States would halve greenhouse emissions by 2030 as part of its new commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement that his predecessor Donald Trump withdrew the country from in 2017.

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Biden to Cut Duty-Free Access for Ethiopia, Mali, Guinea if Human Rights Issues Persist

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The United States will remove Ethiopia, Mali, and Guinea from the list of beneficiaries under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which provides access to duty-free trade, if they fail to address human rights violations by January 1, President Joe Biden said on Tuesday.

"I am providing advance notification of my intent to terminate the designation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Republic of Guinea, and the Republic of Mali as beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries under the African Growth and Opportunity Act," Biden wrote in a letter to Congress. "Despite intensive engagement between the United States and the Governments of Ethiopia, Guinea, and Mali, these governments have failed to address United States concerns about their non-compliance with the AGOA eligibility criteria."

Biden noted that all the three countries' recent actions in the realm of human rights protection and democracy go against the AGOA compliance requirements.

Later in the day, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said in a statement that the Biden administration is "deeply concerned" by the unconstitutional change of power in Guinea and Mali, and the human rights violations allegedly perpetrated by the Ethiopian government. Moreover, Tai announced that the administration will provide the three countries with "clear benchmarks for a pathway toward reinstatement" of their rights under AGOA.

All three African nations have been gripped in recent years by internal conflicts stemming from different causes and resulting in political and social crises.

Ethiopia has seen internal conflict in its Tigray region for almost a year, while Mali has experienced two military coups in as many years. In Guinea, a military uprising led by Mamady Doumbouya in September dismissed the Guinean government, closed the borders and unveiled a transitional charter.

US B-1 Bombers, Norwegian F-35 Fighter Jets Conduct Military Drill Over Arctic - Air Force

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Two US B-1B bombers joined Norwegian F-35 fighter jets conducting a military drill over the Arctic focused on deterrence, the US Air Force said on Tuesday.

"Two B-1B Lancers from the 9th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron joined Norwegian Air Force F-35 Lightning II aircraft over the Arctic region, today, as part of a Bomber Task Force Europe 22-1 integration and deterrence mission," the US Air Force said in a press release. US Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa Commander Gen. Jeff Harrigian said in the release that the military exercise enhances NATO's response to threats throughout the Arctic region.

On Monday, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland said she recently held a meeting with government officials from several northern European countries to discuss matters concerning the Arctic, Africa, Middle East, Russia and China.

Nuland said the United States is strengthening its cooperation with Nordic and Baltic partners through the Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe forum, which includes Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

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US Ready to Pursue First Sanctions Against Those Fueling Ethiopia Crisis - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States is ready to impose sanctions on those impeding a peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia and hindering humanitarian operations there, Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman said on Tuesday.

"The United States is prepared to pursue the first sanctions under the executive order President Biden signed in September against those fueling this crisis and obstructing humanitarian operations. We will be targeting all parties implicated," Feltman remarked.

The Ethiopian leadership must decide whether to proceed along the current path that will lead to sanctions or go down another path that could become beneficial for the bilateral relationship with the United States, the envoy continued.

Earlier in the day, US President Joe Biden announced he is going to remove Ethiopia from the list of beneficiaries under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which provides access to duty-free trade, if Addis Ababa fails to address human rights violations by January 1. The north of the African country has been gripped by an internal conflict for almost a year. In November 2020, the authorities accused the Tigray People's Liberation Front, which has been

dominating the political landscape of Ethiopia for almost three decades, of attacking a military base. The government forces launched a counter-operation, supported by neighboring Eritrea. In spring 2021, Ethiopia announced the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from the Tigray region. In June, the rebels seized the administrative center of Tigray, Mekelle, prompting the government to declare a ceasefire. However, the insurgents later said that they stepped up offensive and took control of a major part of the south of Tigray.

From: Pavel Zakovorotnyy - p.zakovorotnyy@sputniknews.com Subject:

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California Man Jailed for 25 Years in Political Rally Bomb Plot Case - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - A US judge has sentenced California resident Mark Steven Domingo to 25 years in federal prison for his role in an unsuccessful 2019 plot to bomb a political rally in the state, the Justice Department said on Tuesday.

"A California man who planned the bombing of a political rally in Long Beach, California, in 2019 was sentenced [on Monday] to 25 years in federal prison," the Justice Department said in a press release.

On August 11, Domingo, 28 was found guilty of one count of providing material support to terrorists and one count of attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction at the conclusion of a five-day jury trial. He has been in federal custody since April 2019, the release said. "According to court documents and the evidence presented at trial, the investigation into Domingo was prompted by Domingo's online posts and conversations in an online forum, in which he expressed support for violence, specifically a desire to seek violent retribution for attacks against Muslims," the release added.

After considering various attacks - including targeting Jewish people, churches and police officers - Domingo decided to bomb a rally scheduled to take place in Long Beach in April of 2019. He asked a confederate who actually was working with the FBI to invite a bomb-maker into the scheme, according to the release.

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Leonardo, OneWeb Joint Venture to Offer Pentagon Global Satellite Links

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - OneWeb, a UK firm that provides voice and data services through satellites in low Earth orbit, and defense contractor Leonardo joined forces in a bid to provide communications to the US Defense Department, the companies said on Tuesday.

"Utilizing the power of OneWeb's network, Leonardo DRS can augment its existing delivery of end-to-end Information and Communications Technology (ICT) solutions that are reliable, resilient, and secure by adding low latency service," a jointly issued press release said. The partnership could benefit the Defense Department naval and maritime systems, ground combat mission command and network computing, global satellite communications and network infrastructure, avionics systems as well as intelligence and security solutions, the release said. The partnership presumably plans to bid on future Defense Department communications contracts although the release included no details other than plans to offer its services to the US military.

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Biden to Cut Duty-Free Access for Ethiopia, Mali, Guinea if Human Rights Issues Persist

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The United States will remove Ethiopia, Mali, and Guinea from the list of beneficiaries under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which provides access to duty-free trade, if they fail to address human rights violations by January 1, President Joe Biden said on Tuesday.

"I am providing advance notification of my intent to terminate the designation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Republic of Guinea, and the Republic of Mali as beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries under the African Growth and Opportunity Act," Biden wrote in a letter to Congress. "Despite intensive engagement between the United States and the Governments of Ethiopia, Guinea, and Mali, these governments have failed to address United States concerns about their non-compliance with the AGOA eligibility criteria."

Biden noted that all the three countries' recent actions in the realm of human rights protection and democracy go against the AGOA compliance requirements.

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IMF Reaches Staff-Level Agreement With Niger on Three-Year \$278.5Mln Credit Facility

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday it has reached a staff-level agreement with Niger on a three-year credit facility worth some \$278.5 million.

"The Nigerien authorities and the IMF team reached a staff-level agreement on economic and structural policies and reforms that would underpin a new three-year arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) with access to SDR [Special Drawing Rights] 197.4 million (equivalent to about US\$ 278.5 million or 150 percent of quota)," IMF team head Ari Aisen said in a statement after the completion of series of virtual meetings with the Nigerien officials. The agreement is the subject to IMF Management and Executive Board approval, he added.

